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United for Mission

YOUTH & ADULT MISSION

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On the Cover: Raquel is one of many immigrants to Portugal who have found Christ and the Adventist Church through the work of the Vila Cha Adventist Church outside Lisbon.

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 = stories of special interest to teens

Your Offerings at Work



During Communist times pastors and students met in secret to train for leadership. After Communism fell, your Thirteenth Sabbath Offerings helped purchase land and a building to establish the Czech Theological Seminary. The seminary has continued to grow, and young people continue to be trained for service for God and the Adventist Church. Thank you.



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Dear Sabbath School Leader,

This quarter we feature the Inter-European (formerly Euro-Africa) Division, which includes the countries of Andorra, Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, France, Germany, Gibraltar, Holy See, Italy, Liechtenstein, Luxembourg, Malta, Monaco, Portugal, Romania, San Marino, Slovakia, Spain, and Switzerland.

More than 338 million people live in the Inter-European Division, but only about 177,750 are Seventh-day Adventists, a ratio of about one Adventist for every 1,900 people.

The Challenges

Portugal is a modern and largely secular country. Its location near Africa makes it a portal to immigrants from that continent. Many immigrants who settle in Portugal are finding it difficult to support their families on the meager wages they

can earn. They lack warm clothes and household goods necessary to make a new life in Europe.

The Adventist Church in Portugal is working to reach the newcomers by providing surplus food, clothing, and household goods as well as providing classes to help them learn skills that will enable them to adapt to their new homeland.

Bulgaria has struggled economically since it emerged from years under Communist rule. It has experienced economic growth, but remains one of the lowest economic nations in the European Union.

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 often worship in rented apartments or small halls. A simple church will allow them to invite more Romani and their families and friends to worship God.

The Czech Republic is a modern, secular post modern culture. The nation is one of Europe's most atheistic countries. Fewer than 10 percent of the people regularly attend any worship service. Young people who did grow up in a religious environment are especially vulnerable to the call of the world during their university years.

Yours for the kingdom,



Charlotte Ishkanian
Editor, *Mission*

Opportunities

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

- a community outreach center and church for immigrants outside Lisbon, Portugal
- an evangelistic outreach to students at major state universities in Czech Republic and Slovakia
- a church for the Romani (Gypsy) people in western Bulgaria
- Children's Project: Sabbath worship facilities for the Romani (Gypsy) children in western Bulgaria

The Unlikely Answer

CZECH REPUBLIC | July 6

Radomir



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

I was a guitarist in a heavy metal band. For me, life was about making money and having a good time.

Then my father died suddenly. Soon afterward my wife left me and took my daughter. I was shaken to the core. I sensed that something was missing, but I wasn't sure what.

A Praying Woman

A couple years later I met Olga, a woman I had known years earlier. But now she was a Christian, an Adventist. I had never believed in God, never known any Christians, and never heard of Adventists. But I liked her.

I figured that if I talked to her, she would realize that believing in God just isn't normal. I tried to prove from science that God doesn't exist, but she

wasn't convinced. She didn't argue; she just gave me books and videos. For the sake of argument, I read the books and watched the videos, looking for flaws in Christians' thinking.

Olga invited me to church, and I went. The lesson that day was on creation. I tried to convince the class members that creation was wrong, that the world had evolved. The class members didn't become angry or turn away; they just listened and continued with the lesson. I began to think that maybe Christians weren't so wrong after all.

Encountering God

The church had planned a weeklong retreat in the mountains. I had an office near their camp, so I went to my office in the mountain so that I could join in the retreat. The church members were like a family, close and supportive. I was surprised to see that they could have fun without alcohol. My friends and I always drank when we wanted to have a good time. The church members welcomed me as one of them. I found myself enjoying the meetings and the fellowship.

As I continued reading about evolution, I noticed that scientists would come to a place where they couldn't explain

how evolution could arrive at a certain conclusion. There was always missing information. But Christians, it seemed, could fill in the blanks. I began realizing that it took more faith to believe in evolution than in creation. I began to believe that God is Creator.

I had smoked and drunk for years. I'd tried to quit, but I'd always failed. I loved Olga, and I wanted to quit smoking and drinking—for her, if not for myself. Olga told me to ask God for help. I had heard the people in church talking about praying to God, so I tried. “OK, God,” I said. “I don’t believe in you, but if you exist, help me to stop smoking.” I threw away my cigarettes, and God gave me the strength to never smoke again.

On another night as I looked up into the dark sky, I saw the uncountable stars above. I remembered a verse I had read or heard in church that says that God knows the number of the stars in the sky and the

hairs on our heads. I realized that if God is God—and the reality was becoming compelling—He is, indeed, mighty. He holds the universe in His hands, and yet He cares about something so small as the hairs on my head.

Turnaround

I had long thought that I was the god of my life, that I didn’t need anyone else. But that night I accepted Jesus as Creator and as my Lord. I gave Him my life. Soon afterward I asked the pastor to study the Bible with me, and a few months later I was baptized. Then I married the wonderful woman who had led me to God.

God has taught me many lessons in the past few years. He taught me that I’m not the center of my life. I must not take things into my own hands, but let Him handle them. He taught me that He cares about the largest things and the smallest things in our lives. He’s the God of creation, but He’s also concerned about our smallest problems.

And God taught Olga and me that He answers prayers in His own way. She had prayed for a Christian husband, one who didn’t like heavy metal music, who didn’t smoke or drink, and who lived a healthful life. I was none of those. But God changed my life and made me into the man she had been praying for. I sure was an unlikely answer to anyone’s prayer before God took hold of my life.

I still love music, but now instead of playing heavy metal music, I lead a church choir.

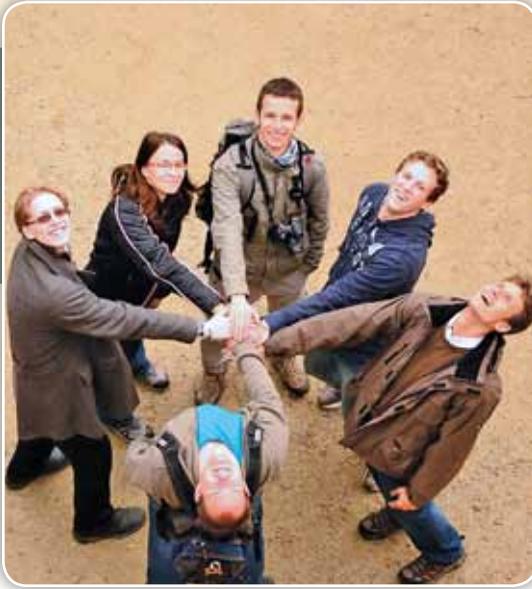
Your mission offerings help people such as me learn the truth about God as Creator and as Savior. Thank you for helping me turn my life around and giving it to Jesus. 🌍

Fast Facts

- The Czech Republic is a small landlocked country in central Europe.
- The people of Czech Republic, as with most modern European countries, are secular and post modern in their thinking. The country is the second-most atheistic country in Europe.
- The official language of Czech Republic is Czech.
- The country has a population of a little more than 10 million.
- Only one in about 10 people in Czech Republic regularly attends any Christian church.

INRI Road, Jesus' Way

INRI Road members



[Invite two young adults to share this mission report.]

Narrator: The large room buzzed with conversation as university students relaxed on couches, around a table, and on folding chairs. Laughter burst from one group.

A young man began strumming chords on his guitar while others still entered. Someone gave out song sheets, and young voices joined in singing favorite choruses. Dressed in sweaters and jeans, the young people looked more like a study group than worshippers.

“Welcome to INRI Road [in-ree, “Jesus’ Way”],” the leader, a university student, said. “To ease your concerns, this is not a church.” A gentle chuckle rippled through the group. “We are friends who meet for different activities throughout the week. Michael leads a group discussion on topics of interest to you. Kara has an English-language discussion group on Thursdays. Daniel here,” he said, nudging the young man next to him, “is the go-to guy for

Sunday sports. And Peter is our music man. You’re welcome to join any of the activities posted in the kitchen.

“Tonight Jacob will share the story of how he came to INRI and what it means to him.”

Finding God Again

Jacob: I came from a Christian home. Although my mother assured me that Jesus was always with me, I often felt alone. In school the kids teased me, and I felt that I didn’t fit in.

Church became a time to be with my friends, not with God. I didn’t attend regularly, and gradually I stopped going altogether.

I started drinking. One night I went to a bar and got drunk. A man started a fight and knocked me to the floor. He raised his foot to kick me in the head, but another guy grabbed him, and I escaped.

A few days later Mom asked me if something had happened the previous Friday night. She said that my aunt had felt impressed that I was in danger and that she must pray. Later I learned that the man who had hit me had kicked another man in the head and killed him. *That could have been me*, I thought.

A Second Chance

I wanted to change my life. I went back to church and felt good about being there. But the feeling didn't last. I was bouncing between God and the world. My failure to clean up my act depressed me, but then I remembered that Mom and my aunt were praying for me.

Then a friend invited me to a youth meeting at INRI Road. I went because I knew some young people there. That night the speaker told his life's story, but it could have been mine. I felt God whisper to me, but my life of drinking and partying was pulling me too.

Another friend invited me to attend an INRI Road weekend retreat that sounded like fun. So I went. But I had a tough time concentrating, because I craved nicotine. After fighting the craving for several hours, I slipped outside to smoke.

Gentle Invitation

Immediately I felt guilty. On my way back to the meeting I met a friend who asked if I was OK. I poured out my problems to her. She listened without judging, and then she said, "You can start again. Jesus will walk with you." At that moment I saw Jesus as my loving Savior. We prayed together, and then we returned to the meeting.

As I gave God my addictions, He took them away. I couldn't have done it on my own.

I love my new life with Jesus. It's not a happy little children's story, but a real-life relationship with Jesus.

God brought me back to Him through the fellowship of INRI Road and young people who are here to discover for themselves that Jesus is real and that He cares. Now I fill my life with God-centered activities, inviting other university students to join INRI Road, the program that has changed my life.

Mission Post

- The Czech Republic is the second-most atheistic country in Europe.
- Young people often leave their childhood faith during their university years.
- INRI Road (Jesus' Way) is a youth organization that offers friendship and faith-building activities throughout the week as well as weekend retreats during school breaks.
- INRI Road has helped many young people stay close to Christ and the church while away from home and has helped dozens of young people such as Jacob find a way to Jesus.
- For more on this project, watch the Adventist Mission DVD this quarter.

Narrator: The room remained quiet as Jacob's story sank in. Many could relate to what they'd just heard.

One of the youth prayed a simple closing prayer, and the young people mingled, chatting with friends and thanking Jacob for sharing his story. Some wiped tears from their eyes, for they too knew the feeling of failure, and some were looking for hope in Jesus.

INRI Road is an Adventist program that seeks to make a welcome home for Adventist and non-Adventist youth, no matter where they are in their walk with God. Part of this quarter's Thirteenth Sabbath Offering will help start more INRI Road programs at universities across the Czech Republic and Slovakia. Thank you for helping the youth of Europe see Jesus in a new way. 🌍

Pathway to Joy

CZECH REPUBLIC | July 20

Jana



Like many young people in Czech Republic, Jana [YAH-nah] grew up in a family that had no religious roots or spiritual guidelines. As a teenager she and her friends went to discos and then graduated to techno-parties. She and her friends experimented with drugs, and she lied to her parents to avoid worrying them.

Jana graduated from high school and went to study in a university in another city. There she met three classmates who were Christians. One was an Adventist. The girls spent a lot of time together, and Jana wondered why they always seemed so happy. They didn't smoke or drink or go to discos, as she had. And yet they truly seemed to enjoy life.

Jana especially liked Alena, the Adventist girl. Something about her drew Jana's admiration. Jana wondered if she

could be happy without drugs or alcohol. Jana stopped going to discos and parties, but found it difficult to give up smoking and drinking.

Although her lifestyle was quite different from her Christian friends, Jana enjoyed them, and they remained her closest friends. They shared their faith with her, and she listened. But she wasn't ready to make such a radical change in her life.

A New Chapter

The girls all finished their studies together, and Jana and Alena decided to continue their studies in another city in Czech Republic. They agreed to share an apartment.

In Brno [BUR-no] Alena began attending a youth program called INRI Road. She invited Jana to go with her and assured her that it wasn't like traditional church. Jana went to the program and was amazed. She loved the singing and the warm friendship. She immediately wanted to be part of the INRI Road fellowship.

Jana made lots of new friends and joined in a number of their activities—game nights, prayer meetings, Bible discussions—just to be around these Christians.

Jana spent more and more time with Alena and her new friends at INRI Road. When Alena invited her to study the Bible, Jana agreed. Everything about Christianity was so new to her; so she started at the beginning.

A year later Jana felt she had to make a decision. She wanted to give her heart to Jesus, but she still loved her boyfriend, and didn't want to break up with him. She invited him to attend some INRI Road programs, and he joined the guys in a few sports events. But he wanted nothing to do with Christianity. Reluctantly, Jana was torn by her new love for God and her old love for her boyfriend. She prayed and cried, and in time chose Jesus.

Unexpected Resistance

Jana gave up smoking and drinking as well as her boyfriend. But to her surprise, her parents resisted her decision to become a Christian. They had grown up atheist and found it difficult to understand why their daughter would want to become a Christian. They didn't know anything about Adventists, and they weren't sure whether it was a cult.

Mission Post

- INRI Road aims to reach Adventist young people and keep them in the church during their vulnerable university years and reach non-Adventist youth, many of whom have rarely or never set foot inside a church.
- Through casual worship services, discussion groups, study groups, sports events, prayer groups, and weekend retreats, INRI Road leaders want to make friends for Jesus through friendship evangelism.
- In the six years that INRI Road has existed, dozens of young people have come into the church, and many more have returned or strengthened their relationship with God.
- For more on INRI Road, see this quarter's Adventist Mission DVD.

Jana stood firm in her faith and was baptized. She continues attending INRI Road and became a group leader in one of the prayer groups. She also led a group called Face to Face, a discussion group that invited a Christian businessperson or community leader and interviewed them about how they lived their Christian life in a secular world. This was a popular group to invite non-Adventist student friends to attend.

Slowly Jana's parents have learned to accept her new Christian life. They are asking questions about her church activities. Recently Jana and her mother were talking about her life before she became a Christian and after. Her mother now agrees that her life as a Christian is better, so much better.

"INRI Road was a great thing for me, a turning point in my life," she says. "I probably wouldn't have stepped inside a traditional church, but INRI Road isn't traditional. It meets the needs of today's young people, many of whom, like me, never experienced Christ before.

"The friends I have made here, the casual times as well as the spiritual times, have made a huge impact on my life. I saw that young people can be happy without drugs or alcohol. I had always thought that these things made me happy, but now I know they are only poor substitutes. Christ is the only way to be truly happy."

Part of this quarter's Thirteenth Sabbath Offering will help expand the INRI Road outreach throughout the Czech Republic and Slovakia so that thousands of young adults can taste for themselves the beauty, the love, the wonder of our Savior. 🌍

Turned Around

CZECH REPUBLIC | July 27

Josef



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

My name is Josef [Yo-sef]. I was an angry troublemaker in my teens. My dad insisted that my brother and I go to church. I didn't want to be there, and I let others know. I didn't pay attention and sometimes argued with members.

Outside of church I hated people for no good reason and picked fights with people on the streets, people I didn't even know.

The Bathroom Prayer

Two years ago the church had a youth camp, and my brother and I were expected to go. I made no secret that I didn't want to be there, though I hoped to meet some girls. I had trouble talking to girls, but I still wanted to be friends.

At camp we had three meetings a day. The pastor talked about people who had met God and whose lives had been changed. I didn't want to admit it, but his stories had an impact on me. I wondered if my problems with girls would clear up if I gave God a chance. Frustrated, I left the meeting and walked to the bathroom. I locked the door and prayed. I apologized to God for all the trouble I had caused and asked Him to help me. I surprised even myself. Suddenly I was so overwhelmed with a sense of forgiveness that I cried. Imagine, Mr. Tough Guy crying!

The next afternoon as I walked along the beach, I met a girl I knew a little. We had never really talked before. But before I knew it, we had talked for four hours!

My friends recognized that something had happened to me, something big. I didn't say much, but I knew that God had answered my prayers. He had turned my life around.

Spreading the Love

When we returned home from camp, I didn't want to lose what I had found with God. I continued to pray and read the Bible. When I met people whom I had once picked fights with, I felt different toward them. I smiled and waved. But God took me a step further, and urged me to tell them I loved them. So I did. I had asked God to forgive me for what I'd done to them, but now I asked them for forgiveness. At first they didn't believe me, but as they saw I had truly changed, they responded.

I apologized to my teachers for my disrespect in class, and to my classmates, my friends, my brother, and my parents. They all could see that I was different.

A couple of angry teens in our town threatened me one day. In the old days I would have fought with them. But I just smiled and told them, "You think you are losers, but in God's eyes you are

precious." The guys seemed shocked, so I kept talking. I invited them to our youth program at church. One of them came.

Reaching Out

My brother and I and two other guys organized a series of youth meetings for young people in church. We invited our friends on Facebook and other social media. We planned the meetings to appeal to young people our age and with some of the same challenges we face.

Our church rarely has more than 25 people in it, and most of them are older folk. But thanks to God and prayer, we had some 70 people, mostly young people, attending our meetings. Some of the youth who came wanted to talk about their problems—problems with their families, with drugs, and even with thoughts of suicide. I counseled as many as I could—I, who had needed counseling just a year earlier!

I had to stop counseling and even speaking in the meetings as my senior high exams approached. These exams determine not only whether we graduate, but also whether we get into a college or university. I had never been a great student, but I was determined that, with God's help, I'd do my best to honor Him. I graduated and dedicated my life to God to help others. I am now studying at the Adventist seminary to prepare to serve God in whatever way He sees fit. I have seen the power of God to change lives, and I have felt His hand in my life. I want to share that power with everyone.

You know, the seminary I attend in Czech Republic was started with funds from a Thirteenth Sabbath Offering several years ago. So thank you for offerings and for your prayers. They're working. 🌍

Mission Post

- During Communist times young Adventists had to meet secretly to study God's Word and prepare for the ministry. They had no opportunity to attend a seminary and study full-time for the ministry.
- Several years ago part of our Thirteenth Sabbath Offering helped the Czech Republic purchase a piece of land and a building to establish the Adventist seminary. It has grown significantly since then, and is training young people, seasoned pastors, and Bible workers to be effective workers for God in their country. Thank you for sharing so that others can spread God's love.

I Was Hungry



PORTUGAL | August 3

Maria-Isabel

Maria Santos smiled and greeted the small crowd of immigrants who had gathered at the door of the Adventist church. She unlocked the door and invited those who were waiting to come inside. Maria hurried upstairs to unlock the rooms that serve as the church's community services center.

A van stopped outside, and two men unloaded bread and fresh vegetables from a food bank and grocery store. The men carried the food upstairs, where two women sorted it out.

The community services center of the church is crowded into two small rooms and a hallway on the second floor of the church. Shelves line one room, sagging under the weight of canned fruits and vegetables, pasta, and dried milk. Two freezers hold frozen goods, and a

refrigerator is loaded to capacity with yogurt from a local food chain. Hanging from rods near the high ceiling are rows of coats, sweaters, and other warm clothes. Winter is coming. In the nearby hallway, perishable foods fill the tables. These must be distributed today, or they will spoil before they can be used.

The Hungry and Cold

A woman slowly climbs the steps. Her arthritic joints can't move fast. She smiles at the receptionist, who invites her to sit down and chat while Maria fills her bags. "How is your grandson," the receptionist asks, "and your husband?"

"Little Tony is well," the woman says. "But my husband—the cold weather bothers him. Could I get him a sweater?" she asks, eyeing the clothes in the next room. The women choose a sweater that will fit her husband. Then someone helps her downstairs, where she will wait until the van returns and the driver can take her and her food home. Three bags of groceries are heavy, and she has more than a mile to walk.

A man arrives, speaking in low, shy tones. He isn't used to coming to the center for food, but his wife is ill, and they are hungry. The women quickly pack several bags of foods for him. They eye his thin jacket and ask if he needs a sweater or a coat. "I have no coat," he

says, embarrassed. They help him select a warm used coat, which he slips on before he leaves. He thanks the women gratefully and starts down the stairs.

The line grows and shrinks as the hours pass. Before the center closes for the day, they will have helped dozens of families, mostly immigrants, survive another week.

Ana's husband has a job, but his wages are too low to provide for the family of four. They were forced to move in with Ana's grandmother in a one-bedroom home. They come for food to help make ends meet. Maria makes sure that every bag contains a book or a magazine that will encourage the family to trust God. Ana appreciates the spiritual food as well as the physical food.

Gertrude is an older woman, a widow, who lives in a small house near the church. Her pension doesn't cover her monthly needs. When Gertrude came to the church for help, the women chatted. Over time they became friends. "We often talk about God," Maria says. The pastor met Gertrude and visited her home. He offered to study the Bible with her, and Gertrude agreed. She enjoyed the Bible studies and began attending church. Gertrude has been baptized and rejoices in her new family in Christ.

Many Hands

Maria doesn't work alone. Several church members help, including some who are not Adventists. They believe in what the church is doing. One woman began coming to church after helping out for months. Another has attended a cooking course.

And when the center is open, the pastor is usually there, talking to people and offering encouragement and spiritual help.

Mission Post

- Immigrants make up the majority of residents in several communities outside Lisbon, Portugal. In the depressed economy, these people find it hard to support their families. But they are open to hearing the gospel of Christ.
- The church of Portugal supports the outreach of the community services center in these communities. It opens doors for evangelism and leads the hungry to Jesus.
- A building that can house the community services center and a church will be built in the heart of this region so that many can find physical and spiritual food and new friends in Christ.
- For more on this project, see this quarter's Adventist Mission DVD.

"So many come to the center for food. But they need spiritual food as well," Maria says. She and her team work hard to meet both their physical and spiritual needs. "This is God's work. We need more room so that we can help more people. We're praying to open a new community center near here so that we can do more for the people in the communities we serve." Maria selects some literature and a children's book to add to one woman's bags. "I remember that Jesus said, 'I was hungry, and you gave me something to eat.'"

Part of this quarter's Thirteenth Sabbath Offering will help build a larger, more efficient community center and church in this immigrant community just outside Lisbon, Portugal. Thank you for helping the church in this community be God's hands and heart to the people they serve. 🌍



The Stubborn Pilgrim

Elena

Elena knocked loudly on the church door. When her knuckles hurt, she used her fist. Frustration rose inside her. *I've come all the way across Paris to worship, and the church is closed!* she thought. She stepped back and looked for a sign identifying the church, but she saw nothing. The building looked a bit tattered. Maybe she didn't have the right address.

Slowly Elena made her way back to the subway to return to the apartment she shared with relatives. *Maybe next week they'll be back from wherever they've gone,* she thought.

Mystery of the Empty Church

Elena had recently moved to Paris to take a job nearer to her husband, who had come to France to work.

When she returned to her apartment, she checked on the Internet and verified the church's address. The next Sabbath Elena again got up early and made her way

by bus and subway to the same run-down building. Again she knocked, and again no one responded. Frustrated and angry, she muttered to herself. "I can't believe this. What's wrong?"

Elena slowly walked back to the bus stop to await the next bus. From there she took the subway into the center of Paris. She fumed to herself over not finding anyone at the church. But her Russian temperament made her all the more determined to find an Adventist church in this city. The Adventist church was the only church she had ever attended, and she longed for the fellowship and warmth that she and her husband had found in the little congregation back in Portugal.

Elena wandered through the plaza, passing businesspeople, shoppers, and couples. She missed her husband, whose work kept him in another city in France. Disappointment welled up inside her. She thought about Pastor Agosto [ah-GOHS-toh], her husband's cousin, who had first invited the couple to visit the church. At first they had refused. Then they had gone just to be polite. But soon they'd felt a part of the little group of worshippers.

“You Can’t Come In”

Suddenly Elena stopped. A sign above her head caught her attention. “Seventh-day Adventist Church,” it read. Joy bubbled inside her as she realized that the office-looking building was actually a church. She hurried up the steps and pulled at the door. A man opened the door a few inches and said something to her in French. She couldn’t understand what he had said, but she understood his gesture: You can’t come in.

Elena frowned. How could he tell her to go away? Elena watched people inside walk by carrying large jugs of water and towels. All she wanted was to worship, even if she couldn’t understand what they were saying. Weary and saddened, Elena backed away from the door and made her way down the steps. She returned to the subway and made her way home.

Later that week Elena called Pastor Augusto in Portugal. When he answered

the telephone, Elena felt her anger surface again. “I tried to go to the Adventist church here in Paris, but they won’t let me inside!” she said.

Finding a Family

Pastor Augusto spoke calmly and promised to find out what was happening. He called her back to tell her that the first church was permanently closed, and the second church was having Communion. “They had more people inside than the safety codes permit,” he said. “They couldn’t let anyone else in.” Then Pastor Agosto gave her the phone number of a Portuguese-speaking pastor in Paris. “Call him,” Pastor Agosto said. “He will welcome you.”

Elena called the pastor and was immediately invited to worship with the congregation the following Sabbath. Elena went to the Portuguese church and was warmly welcomed. Sliding into a seat, she felt at home at last. A few months later Elena and her husband prepared for baptism.

Eventually the couple moved back to Portugal. Once more they could attend the little church with a big heart near their home. There Elena and her husband were baptized.

“That time of loneliness was when I realized I needed God,” Elena says. Elena and her husband are again separated because of work. But she finds comfort in She is a pilgrim finally at peace.

The little congregation has outgrown its rented storefront sanctuary. They need to move to a larger place, a place they can buy. Part of this quarter’s Thirteenth Sabbath Offering will help provide Elena’s largely immigrant congregation with a permanent church home. 🌍

Mission Post

- Lisbon, the capital city of Portugal, has a population of more than a half million people.
- A significant number of immigrants, mostly from Africa, are settling in the Lisbon area. During these economically difficult times, many of these immigrants are struggling to find work that can support their families.
- Part of this quarter’s Thirteenth Sabbath Offering will help build a permanent community outreach center that will include a church for its members.
- For more on this quarter’s Thirteenth Sabbath Project in Portugal, see the Adventist Mission DVD.



Sharing the Gifts

Isabel

Isabel held the phone tightly against her ear. The call came from Isabel's former boss, a bank manager on a tiny island off the western coast of Africa. "This woman, Cleria [KLER-ee-ah], is quite sick. She needs a place to stay while she receives medical care in Portugal," her former boss said. "Can you help her?"

"I'll do what I can," Isabel answered. She agreed to meet Cleria at the airport.

Isabel set down the phone and looked around her small living room. The tiny house that she and her husband and five children lived in was already bursting at the seams, but her children were willing to share their beds with others. She began clearing her boys' room to make space for their new houseguest.

A few days later Isabel met Cleria and drove her to the hospital. Cleria's labored breathing urged Isabel through the midday traffic. "We'll be at the hospital soon,"

Isabel said. Cleria nodded wearily.

Hours later Isabel paid for Cleria's treatment and drove her home. She showed her to the bedroom so she could rest until dinner.

While Isabel set about preparing dinner, her daughters set the table. They worked quietly so as not to disturb Cleria.

After dinner Isabel invited Cleria to join the family for evening worship. Isabel explained that the family reads the Bible and prays morning and evening, and they attend church on Sabbath. Cleria was grateful for a home to stay in and willingly joined the family for worship.

Another Spirit

Cleria remained with Isabel's family for six weeks. Then she told Isabel that she had relatives in Portugal who wanted her to stay with them and try a traditional healer. "They don't think the medicines the doctors are giving me are working," she said softly. "They insist that I stay with them a week so that they can explore other treatments."

"Other treatments?" Isabel asked uncomfortably. She knew she couldn't force Cleria to stay with her, but she knew that the traditional healers back home in

Africa were witch doctors. Sadly Isabel said goodbye to Cleria.

A week later Cleria returned. “How did your treatments go?” Isabel asked uncertainly.

“Your home doesn’t have the right spirits to allow the healers to make me well,” Cleria answered.

A shiver traced Isabel’s spine. *So*, Isabel thought, *a witch doctor has been treating Cleria*. “The spirit in my house is the Holy Spirit,” Isabel said firmly. “He doesn’t allow evil spirits to dwell where His Spirit lives.”

“I must return to my relative’s home,” Cleria said, “I can’t feel comfortable with the spirits here.”

Isabel sighed and helped her friend pack. “We will pray for you while you’re gone,” Isabel said. Isabel and her family placed Cleria in God’s hands and asked Him to shelter her from evil spirits and accept healing from Jesus, the Great Physician.

A Lasting Legacy

A few weeks later Cleria returned to Isabel’s home. She continued treatments at the hospital and joined the family in worship until her visa expired and she returned home. Cleria accepted the Bible and some books about God that Isabel offered. She promised to read them.

A few months later Cleria wrote that she had accepted Jesus as her Savior and was preparing for baptism. She was using the books Isabel had given her in a small study group that she hosted in her home. Later she said that her son had become an Adventist.

A year later Isabel learned that Cleria had died. “Her last words to her family were ‘Be faithful to God,’” Isabel says.

“I’m happy that we shared our home with her, that we could teach her God’s

Fast Facts

- Isabel is a member of a church made up almost entirely of immigrants. They operate a community center, distributing food, clothing, and household goods to those who need them most. Each bag of food includes a tract or an inspirational book to encourage the recipient.
- An expanded community center that includes a church will help the Adventist community serve its immigrant neighbors better. Part of our Thirteenth Sabbath Offering will help purchase a building that can house an expanded community center, a church, and other outreach programs. Thank you for sharing.

love and pray for her. Our prayers for her have been answered. We can look forward to seeing her again in heaven.”

The Gifts

Isabel uses her gift of hospitality to lead others to Jesus. Other members in her little congregation outside Lisbon, Portugal, share their gifts of teaching, evangelism, and languages to introduce others to the Savior. Their gifts are growing a congregation that overflows their rented hall.

Their ministry to the community is growing as well, and they need space to organize that ministry to more effectively serve the community.

Part of this quarter’s Thirteenth Sabbath Offering will help provide the community center and worship hall so that this congregation can have a permanent home and minister more effectively in their community. Thank you for giving. 🌍

Goats and Friends

PORTUGAL | August 24

Christof



Christof is 13 years old. He lives with his parents and two brothers in a rural valley in central Portugal. They moved to their new home in Portugal a few years ago so that their parents could homeschool the boys.

Living in the remote countryside was a new experience for Christof and his brothers. They learned to work in the garden and grow their own food. They learned to raise chickens. They learned to drive a tractor along rocky paths.

One day Christof saw his elderly neighbor, Antonio Lopez, herding his goats. Christof was intrigued by the goats, and he decided that he wanted to raise goats too. But he didn't know much about goats, so he asked Antonio Lopez, "What

do goats eat? Do they need lots of care? How much milk do they produce? Is it hard to milk them? Are goats expensive to buy? Where can I get some goats?"

Antonio Lopez was very helpful and taught Christof what he needed to know about raising goats. Christof helped take care of Antonio Lopez' goats until the boy was able to buy some goats of his own. Antonio Lopez offered Christof advice whenever Christof needed help with his little herd, and his goats thrived. The old man and young boy talked about goats almost every day and quickly became close friends.

Beyond Goats

One day Christof asked Antonio, "Do you believe in God?"

"Yes," the old man said. "I guess I do believe." When Christof realized that Antonio couldn't read, the boy offered to bring his Bible and read to Antonio. "That would be good," Antonio agreed.

And from that day on, whenever Christof visited Antonio, he brought his Bible and read to his friend.

"What religion do you belong to?" the old man asked one day.

"My family and I are Seventh-day Adventists," the boy answered. "We worship God on the Sabbath."

Fast Facts

- Portugal is a rectangular country lying south and west of Spain on the Iberian Peninsula. The country's long coastline faces the Atlantic Ocean. Its capital and largest city is Lisbon.
- The official language is Portuguese, which is also spoken in Brazil and two countries in Africa as well as several islands of the Atlantic and Pacific, as well as smaller holdings in Asia.
- The people of Portugal reflect a diverse mixture of cultures. In recent decades immigrants from Africa, Brazil, and Asia have given the country an even more multicultural character.

“Oh, I know about the Sabbath,” Antonio said. “My grandmother told me about it when I was a boy.”

Christof was surprised and pleased. Since the family had moved to Portugal, he hadn't met anyone except Adventists who had heard of the church or knew about the Sabbath. Later that day Christof told his parents what Antonio had said.

The next time Christof visited Antonio, Christof invited his friend to go to church with his family. But the church was far, and the road was rough—too far and too rough for an old man to travel. So on Sundays Christof and his brothers and his parents went to Antonio Lopez' house to study the Bible with him there. Sometimes the pastor and his family joined them. Word soon spread through the tiny village that Christof was reading the Bible to Antonio. Marie-Elise, Antonio's neighbor, couldn't read either. She wanted Christof to read the Bible to her as well. In fact, most of the old

villagers couldn't read well and wanted the boy to read the Bible to them.

When Christof was not doing his schoolwork or helping out at home or caring for his goats or reading to Antonio or Marie-Elise, he was meeting other neighbors and making new friends. Most of the people who lived in the community were seniors. Christof and his brothers were the only children who lived there.

The villagers loved the lively youngsters who were so polite and helpful. They offered to help work in people's garden or care for the animals or do other chores the senior couldn't manage well anymore. Christof and his brothers became the grandchildren of the village.

Sharing the Word

Christof's family wanted to do more than just read the Bible to the villagers. They offered to hold a weeklong series of Bible studies. Everyone—*everyone*—in the village attended. After the week of meetings, the family and sometimes the pastor held weekly meetings in a home in the village.

People in neighboring villages heard about the meetings, and they asked to hear the message too. Antonio's brother, who lives across the mountain, invited the family to come to his village. Today three small villages have small groups meeting regularly to study the Bible and learn of God's love. Some villagers have even begun worshipping on the Sabbath.

God's love is spreading in the mountains of central Portugal. Although most people in this area are opposed to new ideas and new religions, they are accepting God's message of love, a message that started with a young boy, an old man, and some goats. 🌍



Growing Pains

Pastor Stefan

Granny Anna clutched her young grandson's hand as she hurried down the rain-slickened road. She walked as fast as her stiff legs could move.

Granny and little Roman reached the corner and turned into a muddy courtyard. She heard people inside the building singing joyfully, but instead of gladness, Granny Anna's heart sank. She was late.

Her pace slowed as she and little Roman made their way toward the door. A cluster of children hovered near the door. Granny Anna knew without asking that the seats inside the house church were taken. She stood by the door for a few minutes, then turned and started toward home. She and Roman would miss church today. There was no room inside. *Tomorrow*, she thought, *tomorrow we will try again*.

A Growing Community

Granny Anna lives in southwestern Bulgaria. She is a Romani, a Gypsy. The

city has a large population of Romani people, and several years ago a few Romani joined the Bulgarian Adventist Church there. The Romani membership grew, and before long they expressed their desire to form their own congregation. With the help of the mission, they rented the first-floor apartment in the house and renovated it to serve as a church.

The Romani congregation continued to grow and now numbers more than 70. That number would crowd any house church, but the nonmembers far outnumber the members, and seats are at a premium for every service. Today some 160 members and friends come, seeking God's blessing and offering their worship on Sabbaths and nearly every day throughout the week.

Today every possible wall has been removed to make room for worshippers. Chairs stand in tight rows with barely room for feet between them. When the sanctuary fills, more chairs are added to the narrow hallway, and when weather permits, the children meet outside so more adults can hear the sermon by closed-circuit TV in the children's room. Still some must stand outside, catching snippets of the worship service through an open door or window.

Sometimes the upstairs neighbors

complain when the believers' singing at 9:00 on Sabbath morning awakens them or when the Friday and Sabbath vespers disturb their television watching. So the group sings more softly.

Sending Children Home

Many of the children don't come to church simply because there's no room for them. Or if they come and find their room full of adults, they must return home. The adults don't like the situation, for they realize that children are important to God's family.

The Romani congregation is eager to share its faith with fellow Romani. They want to find a larger place to worship. But because they don't earn much as seamstresses, street sweepers, and construction workers, and because many have no jobs at all due to the sagging economy, they struggle to simply pay the rent on the building they now occupy.

A Growing Problem

"The Romani have a close-knit community," Pastor Stefan says. "When they find faith in Jesus, they tell others, and the number of people coming to worship literally explodes.

"Many visitors come to worship with us, but even when members stay away so visitors can have a seat, we're crowded," Pastor Stefan adds. "If we had a church, the membership would explode. And we could have room for them. They are our future.

"We'd love to hold evangelistic meetings, but we simply don't have room to accommodate the people," he says. "For now, we must focus on those who are already coming."

The church has organized small groups that meet on Sabbath afternoon to study

Mission Post

- The Romani people, sometimes called Gypsies, live throughout Europe and even in North and South America. They are a close-knit community and speak their own language, called Romaani, which includes several dialects.
- The Romani people once were seminomadic, but now have settled into communities located in or near cities. They are a closely knit culture. Once a few Romani have become believers, the walls of separation break down and many follow them.
- Part of this quarter's Thirteenth Sabbath Offering will help build a church for the Romani in the city of Blagoevgrad [BLAH-gee-ohv-grahd], Bulgaria.

the Bible and reach out to the community. "We would love to have two services, but the Romani people are so intent on being in the church that they would stay for the second service, even if it was exactly like the first service.

"There's no turning people away," Pastor Stefan adds. "These people can't get enough of God's Word. Whenever there's a meeting, people come. In the winter we have meetings every evening of the week."

An Opportunity to Evangelize

This community of believers is just one of dozens of Romani communities in Bulgaria. They fill the churches, and often stand outside to hear God's Word. We can help grow the church in Bulgaria this Thirteenth Sabbath. Part of the offering will help build a simple church for the Romani community in this city. Thank you for helping advance God's work in a fruitful region of His vineyard. 🌍



The Dream

Anka

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

A helicopter whirred over my head, whipping my hair into my eyes. Then it rose and flew a short distance away. I ran to follow it, for I saw it descend near my house. The helicopter hovered as a rope ladder unfurled and a man in a suit climbed down the ladder. He reached the ground as I raced into my yard. Many of the neighbors were there as well.

I greeted the man as he stepped onto the ground. He put his hand to his chest and bowed slightly, a greeting of respect.

Then I woke up. I thought about the dream and wondered what it meant. I was sure I had never met this man from the helicopter, but his face—and especially his eyes—stayed in my mind.

The Invitation

My sister and brother-in-law had become Adventists and often invited me

to their church. But I had never been interested in going. Then she invited me to attend a baptism at her church. I was curious. I had never seen a baptism of adults before, and I wondered what it would be like. I accepted her invitation.

On the day of the ceremony my sister and her family and I traveled to a nearby town. Her own church met in an old café and didn't have a baptistry. I was eager to see this new ceremony, but I was wary of the church and its teachings. So I found a seat in the back near the door, just in case I needed to escape quickly.

The people began singing as they awaited the arrival of the visiting pastor, but I didn't know the songs, so I just listened. Then I heard a small disturbance just outside the door and turned my head to see who was coming. I gasped, for there stood the same man I had seen in my dream. Shock coursed through me, but I managed to nod a greeting toward him.

Mission Post

- Western Bulgaria has about 370,000 Romani, or Gypsy, people. The Adventist message is spreading rapidly among the Romani.
- The town of Montana in northwestern Bulgaria has a growing congregation of Romani Adventists. They worship in an old café that has no insulation, no heat, and no running water. It's all they can afford.
- Part of the Thirteenth Sabbath Offering three years ago has helped to buy a piece of land on which a church is being built. It will house about 180 worshippers, including children's classes.
- This quarter, another Romani congregation in Bulgaria will receive help to build a church as well.

He replied with a hand to his chest and a slight bow, exactly how he had in my dream. I sat stunned as the man walked to the front of the little church and joined the service. As he stood to conduct the baptismal service, I cried tears of joy. I realized that God cares for me, enough to send me a dream and then bring me to this place, exactly where He wanted me to be on this very day.

Convinced and Convicted

After the service I stayed for lunch with my sister and brother-in-law. To my surprise, the pastor sat at our table. I watched him and listened to him, but I did not feel brave enough to talk to him. I wondered if he knew that God had shown me his face in a dream.

That day I decided that I would attend the Adventist church. God's attention

to detail in my life melted my heart. In the year that followed I attended church faithfully and learned more about this caring, personal God. A year after I began attending church, I was baptized by the pastor who had been in my dream.

After my baptism I shyly approached the pastor's wife, Ginka. "God sent me a dream more than a year ago," I told her. "In it I saw your husband wearing exactly what he wore the first time I visited the church. That is how I knew God cares for me and wanted me in this church."

Ginka smiled gratefully. "Thank you," she said. "You don't know this, but we were reluctant to accept the call to serve in this district because I wasn't well. But God impressed us to come. That baptism you saw was the first baptism my husband had in this district."

My heart warmed at the way God had worked in both of our lives. God continued his work in my life. I had never learned to read as a child, and I longed to be able to read the Bible and share it with others. God taught me to read, and today I share that gift with the children of the church who meet in my home for Sabbath School.

Thank You

Our little church still meets in that abandoned café building. It is a single room that has no heat and no electricity. But thanks to your gifts three years ago, we now have land and are building a church in which to worship. When it is completed, many more people will come to worship and learn about the God who cares for every detail of our lives. Thank you for being a part of God's miracle in my town in northern Bulgaria. 🌍



Spreading the Faith

Teddy

Teddy and her friend Suzy are high school students and Adventists living in Montana, a city in northwestern Bulgaria. They were concerned about their friend, Claudia, who was spending too much time with the wrong crowd at school. The girls began praying for their friend.

Teddy made a special effort to spend time with Claudia, inviting her to go shopping or share a pizza and a good laugh. One day Claudia said, “I didn’t know that Christians could have so much fun! You and Suzy are really fun people!”

Claudia liked going to discos, and Teddy wasn’t sure if she would enjoy a religious meeting. But she invited Claudia to Friday evening vespers, adding that the group loves to sing and have a good time while they study the Bible.

Claudia went, and she loved it. She began attending regularly and joined other youth activities. When Claudia’s other

friends invited her to the disco, she told them that she had found a better place to spend her time—in church!

That’s how God’s message is spreading among the Romani people—friend to friend.

A Chain of Friendship

Most Romani (Gypsy) people in Bulgaria retain their traditional language and culture. When one Romani in this closely knit culture finds Christ, others follow. In the city of Kyustendil [KYOOOSten-dil] in western Bulgaria, the Adventist church has exploded among the Romani people. Today one out of every 11 Romani in this city is an Adventist.

The biggest challenge to membership growth is finding meeting halls that are appropriate for worship. Money is a challenge, for the majority of Romani are manual laborers and don’t earn a large salary. Other Adventists in Bulgaria are helping all they can, but they too struggle financially.

Challenges and Opportunities

While the Romani living in the Montana area of northwestern Bulgaria tend to value education more than the average, they face other challenges. The

area has retained a stronger Communist and atheistic view of life, which makes it more difficult to reach both the Romani and the Bulgarian populations with the gospel. While the close ties among the Romani community make it easier to share the gospel with other members of the community, the atheistic mind-set leaves individuals more resistant to the gospel.

When the current Adventist pastor, Radev, first arrived to lead the Montana Romani congregation, just 15 Romani Adventists met with the Bulgarian congregation. The group held a successful evangelistic series among the Romani, and several people were baptized. A group of Romani who had been working overseas returned and joined the congregation.

Several members lived in a small town some 20 miles [about 30 kilometers] from Montana. Today this town also has a church with 20 members and about 15 visitors plus children.

“We’re seeing an opening in the mind-set of the Romani people,” Pastor Radev says. “More people come to listen to the message God has for them. They haven’t yet made decisions to join God’s family, but they are listening and learning.”

Hope and a Future

About 5,000 Romani live in the town of Montana, a city of about 40,000 in the northwestern corner of Bulgaria. That’s one Romani for every eight people in the city. The Romani church has 45 members and about 30 regular visitors. In addition, about 20 children regularly attend their own services in a nearby house. The believers meet in an old café, an unheated building with thin walls and no electricity or running water in the heart of the Romani community.

Fast Facts

- Bulgaria has about 370,000 Romani people. Most live in the western part of the country.
- The Romani have no dominant religion. Some are Muslim, and some are Christian. Many have no religious preference. In Bulgaria only the Adventist Church and one other Protestant organization has focused on winning the Romani to Christ.
- In 2010 part of a Thirteenth Sabbath Offering was designated to help build a church for the Romani congregation. Land has been purchased, and construction is underway. The Romani believers wish to thank the world church for their support and prayers as they reach out to others in their community.

The church has purchased a piece of land in the community, and a new church is under construction there. The members work to help make their dream of a church come true. The church will seat about 180 and will include rooms for the children and youth. While this sounds like a large church for a congregation of 70 or 80 people, past experience has shown that once the church is built, it will be filled. “We’re planning for growth, but we need to build the church before we can realize that growth,” Pastor Radev says.

The church members look forward to the day that they can hold outreach programs in the community, including small-group meetings and evangelistic series. That’s difficult now, as the café where they worship is inadequate. But soon the day will come when the new church opens and the Romani people will flood in. 🌍

A Work of Faith

BULGARIA | September 22

Student Literature Evangelists



A group of excited, nervous young people stood in a circle to pray. Their mission was to do what had not been done before in Bulgaria: blanket Bulgaria's cities with Christian literature. They knew they couldn't complete the task alone. Only God could make this happen.

Lukash

Lukash, one of the team members, nervously walked downtown. She remembered her fellow worker's encouraging words. "God will be your partner."

"I don't have much experience, God; please be my partner," Lukash prayed.

The books she was carrying grew heavy in her arms as Lukash walked from store to store. "May I see the book you have?" a young man asked Lukash. Surprised, Lukash gave him a copy of *The Desire*

of *Ages* to look through, watching as he flipped through a few pages.

"I want to buy it," he said. Then he asked questions about her church. "I want to go to your church and learn about Jesus." Lukash made change for the book and quickly wrote down the young man's contact information. She smiled broadly and promised to pray for him.

As the young man walked away with his purchase, Lukash knew that God is her partner and that the most important part of her job is sharing His love with others. He would go before her, softening hearts and preparing the way.

Mimi and Albena

Mimi and Albena trudged through the uneven streets. She and her partner had sold nothing all day. A pharmacy stood on Mimi's side of the street. The girls hadn't been able to sell their health books in other pharmacies, but Mimi went inside anyway. There were no customers, so Mimi hoped the pharmacist might want a book.

"I am not interested in health books," the pharmacist said. "However, do you have any spiritual books?"

"Oh, yes!" Mimi said, pulling out *The*

Desire of Ages, The Great Controversy, and several other books. The pharmacist bought six books and asked for the address of Mimi's church.

Today, Mimi and the pharmacist communicate online, and the pharmacist reports that she is reading *The Great Controversy*, and is impressed with it.

In a small, seaside town, Mimi and Albena continued to look for open hearts and sales opportunities.

"What are you selling?" An elderly woman smiled at them both.

"We're selling health books," Mimi said.

"Oh, I don't have any health anymore," the woman replied.

"We have spiritual books as well," Albena offered.

The woman's smile returned. Her excitement was evident as she looked over the books Albena showed her.

"I'm poor and can't afford to buy books," she said, her smile fading.

Albena offered her a free copy of *Steps to Christ*. The woman took the book and,

holding it close, said, "I love my God so much!" As she flipped through the pages, she continued to speak. "I try to pray for my son and daughter, but I can't remember the proper words for the prayer."

"When we pray we talk to God as a friend," Albena said. She scribbled down some Bible texts for the woman to look up.

"Oh, I don't have a Bible," the woman replied.

"We will ask the pastor to bring you a large-print Bible," Albena assured her. The girls prayed with the woman, asking God to continue to guide her. The girls realized that often the highlight of an exchange is not a sale, but the spiritual connections that are made.

Jordan

Jordan knows. He wasn't even trying to sell books when God led him to a special encounter. While he waited for a bus, he began chatting with a middle-aged woman named Camilla.

The two talked for quite a while before they realized that their bus wasn't coming. The group who had been waiting at the bus stop decided to walk into town to catch a different bus. As they walked, Camilla questioned Jordan about his faith.

Once on the bus, the two continued talking. Camilla invited Jordan to visit her family in town. Jordan agreed, and soon he was visiting them regularly. He took them a Bible, and Camilla prayed with them. Camilla has begun to pray, and Jordan is sure that her faith will blossom into a full commitment to God before long.

Whether on or off duty, walking along snowy hillsides or trudging through the city during a summer evangelistic blitz, God's team of student colporteurs has been busy at work in Bulgaria. 🌍

Fast Facts

- Bulgaria is a country of about 7.6 million people. Its population is slowly decreasing as people leave to find better working positions in other countries.
- The capital city is Sofia, and the national language is Bulgarian.
- Adventists have worshipped and shared their faith in Bulgaria for more than 100 years. Today about 7,600 Adventists, one out of every 1,000 people, live in Bulgaria.
- See the Adventist Mission DVD for special features from Bulgaria.

Thirteenth Sabbath Program

➤	Congregational Song	“Seeking the Lost,” <i>The Seventh-day Adventist Hymnal</i> , no. 373
➤	Welcome	
➤	Prayer	
➤	Program	“The Talents God Gave You”
➤	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	“We Have This Hope,” <i>The Seventh-day Adventist Hymnal</i> , no. 214
➤	Closing Prayer	

Participants: Six to 10 young adults, college-age students, or high school students, and a narrator. *[Note: participants do not need to memorize their parts, but they should be familiar enough with the material that they do not have to read everything from the script. Practice so that participants can feel comfortable adding inflection where appropriate.]*

Props: A map of the Inter-European Division. (Download the mission map from www.AdventistMission.org or scan the one on the back of the mission quarterly. Project it onto a screen or draw the map onto a large piece of paper.) Set up a couch and enough chairs to form a semicircle on one side of the stage.

Scene: Three or four young people walk onstage, chatting informally. They take seats on the couch and chairs and settle down.

Youth 1: OK, can we start with prayer? Father, we are here to talk about how we can use our talents to lead others to Jesus. Help us to make a difference in the lives of others we meet day by day. Amen.

That was a pretty exciting challenge the pastor threw out this week when he said that everyone has talents and spiritual gifts that God wants us to use to lead others to Jesus.

Youth 2: Yes, it was. It made me realize that I'm not using my spiritual gifts as I should. It's just so easy to go through life doing what I need to do and not thinking about those around me who need a comforting word and hope in Jesus.

Youth 3: I was pretty impressed with the mission story we had a couple weeks ago about the immigrant ministry near Lisbon, Portugal. Just think, the Adventist immigrants are helping others in their community by distributing food and clothes and household goods to those who don't have work or can't earn enough in their jobs to feed their families. So often immigrants are overlooked, but they need help getting on their feet, understanding their new homeland and new language so they can fit in as productive citizens. I understand that the Adventist church in that town is growing well.

Youth 2: Yes, I remember that. I was impressed with another story about that church. A woman who'd never been to church before had gone after being invited many times. Then she moved to another country and was so lonely she wanted to find a church. She searched all over Paris until she found a church. She would never have looked for an Adventist church if the members back home in Portugal hadn't shown her God's love through their actions.

[Youth 5 and perhaps another youth enter and sit down, apologizing for being late.]

Youth 1: So what can we do to be God's hands and use His gifts to reach others for Jesus?

Youth 4: I attend a public school, and it's really hard to get people interested in

coming to church. Sometimes kids tease me and call me "God boy [or God girl]." Most of the kids I've invited to church are not interested in spending Sabbath in church. I wish we had a more active youth group that would interest kids who don't go to church.

Youth 5: Wait! I was late because I was preparing next week's mission report, and it's about a group in Czech Republic that is doing just that—forming youth groups to minister to high school and university students. *[Pulls mission report from pocket or book bag and opens it.]* They meet every evening of the week for one outreach or another. And it's not all religious stuff. Sometimes they have study groups or practice speaking English together. Other times they meet to study the Bible or discuss a subject of interest to young people in the light of God's Word.

The best part is that it's working! Young people can invite their friends to come to one of the weekly meetings just to meet friendly people, have a hot drink, and talk. No one preaches, no offering is taken, and no one judges anyone else. It's a warm and welcoming place. I wish our young people could do something like this in our church!

Youth 3: Can we ask the youth pastor to help us start something like this here? If we could invite our friends to the church for a non-churchy meeting, something that they would enjoy, maybe they'd be more willing to learn more about who we are and why we worship as we do.

[Young people continue talking quietly and with animation as narrator steps to the podium.]

Narrator: God is honored when we

seek to win others to Jesus using our talents and spiritual gifts. This quarter we've heard how the immigrant church members outside of Lisbon, Portugal, is reaching out to the community, are giving to their community not only physical help, but spiritual encouragement. Because of their love, the church there is growing. The members need space to store the food, clothes, and household goods they receive for distribution to those in need, a community services center. They need classrooms where they can teach stress relief and stop-smoking classes, where they can teach young people how to live full and responsible lives. They need a worship hall of their own, where their worship won't disturb neighbors in the apartment building they now rent.

We've also heard about the strong and growing Adventist Romani community in Bulgaria. The congregation in western Bulgaria worships in an apartment that is packed with chairs. There is hardly room to move around, and standing room only means standing in the hallway to listen to the services. They meet several times every

week, and the church is filled each time. They, too, must worship quietly, for their neighbors don't appreciate being disturbed by their singing on Friday evenings, Sabbath mornings, or midweek meetings.

Finally, we've rejoiced to hear reports of INRI [IN-ree] Road, a ministry to reclaim Adventist young people and bring other youth into the Adventist family in Czech Republic. Friendship has proved to be a strong motivator. Adventist young people have come back to the church, and other young people have discovered the church because of this ministry.

Today we have an opportunity to strengthen our brothers and sisters in these Inter-European countries as they seek to be God's hands to those who need help, His heart to the hopeless, His love to the unloved. Let's give a generous Thirteenth Sabbath Offering today so that their work can grow. And then let's follow their lead and use our own talents and gifts to bring others into our community of faith as well.

[Offering]

Future Thirteenth Sabbath Projects

Fourth quarter will feature the Trans-European Division. Special projects include a dormitory at Newbold College, England; an evangelistic center in Athens, Greece; Bible 3D evangelistic integration program throughout division; an evangelistic/youth/training center in Ohrid, Macedonia.

The children's project (left) is an outreach program geared for unchurched families and focusing on children from birth through early teens throughout the division.



Leader's Resources

For more information on the cultures and history of Bulgaria, Czech Republic, and Portugal, the featured countries 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 additional 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 Mission" in the drop-down menu. Click on "Mission Resources" in the center of the page, 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 download a segment from the DVD at www.AdventistMission.org/dvd.

An offering goal device will help focus attention on world missions and increase weekly mission giving. Ask your Sabbath School Council to set a quarterly mission offering goal, and divide that goal by 14, one part for each of the 12 regular Sabbaths this quarter and two parts for Thirteenth Sabbath. Chart the weekly progress toward the offering goal on the goal device.

One of this quarter's projects is outreach to university-age young people throughout Czech Republic and Slovakia in central Europe. Draw and outline a map of these two countries, identifying the capitals and major population centers. Select pictures of young adults from the Internet or from magazines. Post a photo each week that the Sabbath School reaches its mission goal. If you wish, use a contrasting yarn to link the photo with one of the major cities named. Suggested cities include Prague, Brno, and Olomouc in Czech Republic and Bratislava in Slovakia.

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.

YOUTH & ADULT MISSION

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North Sea

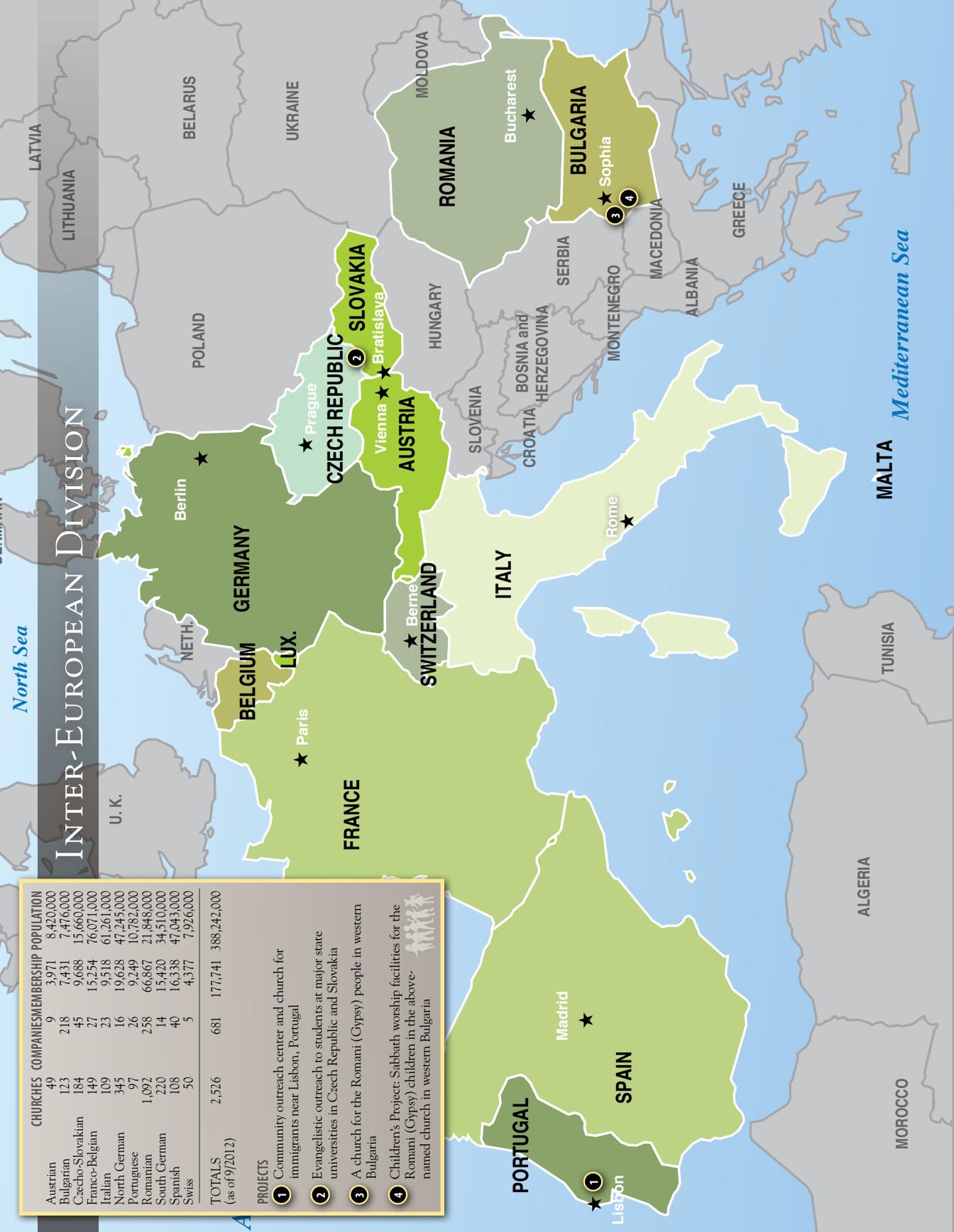
INTER-EUROPEAN DIVISION

Mediterranean Sea

	CHURCHES	COMPANIES	MEMBERSHIP POPULATION
Austrian	49	9	3,971
Bulgarian	123	218	8,420,000
Czecho-Slovakian	184	45	7,476,000
Franco-Belgian	149	27	9,688
Italian	109	23	15,294
North German	345	16	76,071,000
Portuguese	97	26	9,518
Romanian	1,092	258	61,261,000
South German	220	14	19,628
Spanish	108	40	47,245,000
Swiss	50	5	10,782,000
			66,867
			21,848,000
			34,510,000
			16,338
			47,043,000
			4,377
			7,926,000
TOTALS	2,526	681	177,741
(as of 9/2012)			388,242,000

PROJECTS

- 1** Community outreach center and church for immigrants near Lisbon, Portugal
- 2** Evangelistic outreach to students at major state universities in Czech Republic and Slovakia
- 3** A church for the Romani (Gypsy) people in western Bulgaria
- 4** Children's Project: Sabbath worship facilities for the Romani (Gypsy) children in the above-named church in western Bulgaria



LATVIA
LITHUANIA

BELARUS

UKRAINE

MOLDOVA

ROMANIA

Bucharest

BULGARIA

Sophia

GREECE

MACEDONIA

ALBANIA

HUNGARY

SLOVENIA

BOSNIA and HERZEGOVINA

SERBIA

MONTENEGRO

POLAND

CZECH REPUBLIC

SLOVAKIA

Bratslava

AUSTRIA

Vienna

Prague

Berlin

GERMANY

BELGIUM

LUX.

Paris

FRANCE

SWITZERLAND

Berne

ITALY

Rome

Madrid

SPAIN

PORTUGAL

Lisbon

ALGERIA

TUNISIA

MALTA

MOROCCO