

**Mission Posts and Country Facts**  
**Trans-European Division**  
**Third Quarter 2023**

**Latvia**

1. Latvia has 49 churches and 2 companies. With 3,667 members, in a population of 1,882,000, that's one member for every 513 people in the country.
2. The work in Latvia began in the mid-1890s when Gerhard Perk and several colporteurs began work in the Baltic cities. In 1895, Perk began evangelistic work in Riga, the capital of Latvia, and on May 14, 1896, L. R. Conradi organized a church of 12 members there.
3. The rapid growth of the church in Latvia in the first third of the twentieth century was a result of active lay participation in evangelism. In a community where there was no regular minister, one church elder won a total of 37 converts.
4. Lay evangelists in Latvia, including many young people, were trained with the help of two manuals published around that time, entitled *How Shall I Give Bible Studies?* and *Gospel Sales Manual*.
5. In the 1930s, an evangelist organized special youth Bible classes, a choral society, and an orchestra. After four years of training, the young people participated in a countrywide evangelistic campaign. They toured the country providing music for evangelistic services and, at the same time, giving public concerts that provided more than enough funds for the expenses of the trip.
6. The main religion in Latvia is Christianity. As of 2018, about 64 percent of the population identify as Christian, although only about 7 percent attend church services regularly. Around 35 percent identify with no religion.

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7. In the town of Vidzeme, Latvia, there is a museum dedicated to the world's greatest liar — Hieronymus Karl Friedrich Freiherr von Münchhausen, who was known for telling tall tales of his experiences during the Russo-Turkish War and about his travels to the moon. He is known today mainly because of the 1785 book, *Baron Munchausen's Narrative of his Marvellous Travels and Campaigns in Russia* by the German writer Rudolf Erich Raspe, loosely based on the real Münchhausen.
8. The largest river in Latvia is the Daugava, which has been used by Vikings, Russians, and other Europeans for trade, war, and conquest. With a total length of 634 miles (1,020 km), it is about 590 feet (180 m) across when it enters Latvia, winds through the country for 219 miles (352 km), and increases to around 2,460 feet across (750 m) before emptying into the Baltic Sea at Riga.
9. Friedrich Wilhelm Ostwald is the only Latvian to ever win a Nobel Prize. The scientist won the prize in Chemistry in 1909 for his work on catalysis, chemical equilibria, and reaction velocities.

10. More than one third of Latvia's land area is covered by forests, and timber and wood make up the country's most important products.
11. The widest waterfall in Europe, at 817 feet (249 m), is the Venta Rapid on the Venta River in Kuldīga, Latvia. During the spring floods it can increase to 886 feet (270 m).
12. The subminiature camera, the Minox, was created by the Latvian inventor, Walter Zapp in 1936, and became famous as a spy camera.
13. Denim jeans were first invented by a tailor named Jacob. W. Davis (born Jākobs Jufess). Davis was born in Riga, and trained as a tailor, but immigrated to the United States as a young man. The jeans were invented when a customer asked him to make a pair of strong working pants for her husband, who was a woodcutter. Jacob made the pants with duck cloth and reinforced it with copper rivets. The concept was so popular he could not keep up with demand, and he partnered with Levi Strauss to produce the jeans we know today.
14. Latvians have a strong sense of space, and they generally like to keep a few feet between themselves and other people.
15. Latvians make minimal use of gestures while communicating; they find them annoying or distracting. It is considered rude to wave a pointed index finger or persistently point at someone.
16. Art Nouveau architecture makes up about a third of the buildings in the center of Latvia's capital, Riga, making it the highest concentration of Art Nouveau architecture anywhere in the world. Riga was declared the European Culture capital in 2014.
17. Although not officially adopted until 1923, the Latvian flag was used as early as the thirteenth century, making it one of the oldest flags in the world.
18. While Latvian is the official language of the country, Russian (which was widely spoken during the Soviet era) is still the most common secondary language, although it is no longer taught in schools.
19. The wild boar, Eurasian beaver, and brown bear are some of the native Latvian animal species.
20. Ice hockey, followed by basketball, is the most popular sport in Latvia.
21. After the fall of the Soviet Union, Latvia declared independence in May 1990. Russia recognized Latvia's independence in August 1991.
22. Traditional folklore is important in Latvian culture. More than 30,000 melodies and 1.2 million texts of folk songs have been identified, and the associated dances date back well over a thousand years.
23. The national costume is worn at festivals, particularly during the Song and Dance Festivals in Riga and on Midsummer Night, a popular national holiday celebrated on 23 June. There are two styles: the ancient dress from the seventh to the thirteenth centuries, or the ethnic dress from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. One iconic feature of women's traditional dress is the Latvian belt—a wide sash with a woven geometric pattern. Different regions of Latvia have their own distinct patterns and colors.
24. The ballet dancer, choreographer, and actor, Mikhail Baryshnikov, who famously defected from the Soviet Union in 1974, was born in Riga, Latvia.

25. Latvia's birds include nightingales, orioles, blackbirds, woodpeckers, owls, grouse, partridges, finches, tomtits, quails, and larks. Storks and herons can be found in the marshes and meadows.

## Montenegro

1. Montenegro and Serbia together make up the North and South Conferences of the South-East European Union Conference. The conferences have 172 churches and 5,674 members. In a population of 9,222,000, that's one member for every 1,625 people.
2. After the First World War, Montenegro became part of Yugoslavia and remained so until 1992, when the country broke up into independent countries once again. Montenegro and Serbia declared themselves the new Yugoslavia until 1996, when Montenegro held an independence referendum, and the confederation was dissolved.
3. However, the two countries remain entwined in Adventist church structure, with Montenegro making up part of the South Conference of the South-East European Union Conference, along with the central and southern portions of Serbia.
4. The Seventh-day Adventist message was first preached in the Balkan Peninsula in 1880, when A. Seefried went to Skoplje, in Macedonia, as a representative of the British and Foreign Bible Society.
5. With the formation of Yugoslavia at the end of World War I, the Yugoslavian Union Conference was founded in Novi Sad (Serbia) in 1925, and later transferred to Belgrade.
6. Petar Todor was the first Seventh-day Adventist minister born in Yugoslavia to work in his own country. He and his wife were baptized in Arad, Romania in 1900. Three years later, at a conference in Cluj, Romania, he was chosen to serve as a Bible worker and the following year was sent as a pastor to Serbia.
7. According to the 2020 estimate by the Pew Research Center, 76.6 percent of Montenegrins are Christian, 20.3 percent are Muslims, and 3.1 percent don't identify with a religion.

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8. Montenegrin is the official language of Montenegro.
9. Montenegro is named after its mountains: "monte" means mountain and "negro" means black, hence "Black Mountain" or Montenegro. In Montenegrin, the name is Crna Gora.
10. The administrative capital and economic center of Montenegro is Podgorica, but the historical and cultural center is the city of Cetinje.
11. Montenegro's area is 8,582 square miles (13,812 km<sup>2</sup>), its border is 382 miles (614 km), and its coastline is 182 miles (293 km).
12. Montenegro is famous for its 117 beaches, the longest of which is Velika plaža (Ulcinj) at 8 miles (13 km).
13. The country is one of contrasts, beautiful coastlines offset by miles of mountains. The highest peak, Zla Kolata (Prokletije), is 8,313 feet (2,534 m) above sea level.
14. Tara River Canyon is one of the deepest canyons in Europe, reaching up to 4,300 feet (1,300 m) deep. It stretches 51 miles (82 km), with the last 22 miles (36 km) forming the border between Bosnia and Herzegovina and Montenegro.
15. The Ostrog Monastery in Montenegro is one of the largest Orthodox shrines in the world and is visited by members of all faiths.

16. One of the oldest trees in Europe is located in Bar, on the shore of the Adriatic Sea, and is over 2,000 years old. The circumference of the ancient olive tree is about 33 feet (10 m).
17. Lake Skadar is the largest lake in the Balkans and is one of the biggest bird reserves in Europe. It is home to more than 270 bird species and is an important stop for migrating birds. One of the most popular is the Dalmatian Pelican, and visitors can take a trip in a traditional *čun* boat to see the birds. Visitors can also see pygmy cormorants, storks, egrets, ibises, herons, and falcons.
18. Montenegro's Ulcinjska Salinas salt pan, once the biggest salt producer on the Mediterranean, is home to more than 500 flamingos and up to 40,000 birds at a time.
19. The only habitat of the black salamander (*Salamandra atra*) in Montenegro is on the mountain Bogićevica (Prokletije) in the Accursed Mountains mountain range, at an altitude of 6,404 feet (1,952 m).

## Poland

1. Poland has 115 churches and 28 companies. With 5,800 members, in a population of 38,154,000, that's one member for every 6,578 people in the country.
2. In 1888, J. Laubhan, a Seventh-day Adventist worker, and H. Szkubowicz moved from the Crimea to eastern Poland. Their three years' work there resulted in a church in Zarnówka in Volhynia. Although it was most probably in an area now in Russia, it was in any case the first Seventh-day Adventist church in what was then Poland.
3. In 1900, a German named H. Schmitz began preaching in Warsaw, the capital of Poland. Because he could not speak Polish, he began his work by going from house to house, reading the names on the doors. Whenever he found a German name, he knocked, and when he was invited in, he spoke of the Seventh-day Adventist beliefs. As a result of this missionary endeavor, the first church was organized after a few months with German-speaking members.
4. During World War II the occupying German authorities dissolved the Polish Union and prohibited Seventh-day Adventist activity. All church properties were confiscated, and in many places Sabbath worship had to be conducted in secret for fear of persecution.
5. In 1989, Communist rule ended, Poland became politically independent, and the Adventist Church received fuller guarantees of religious freedom.
6. According to a European Union Commission in 2019, 90 percent of Poland's population are Christian (86 percent are Catholic).

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7. Poland is Europe's ninth-largest country, with a land area of 120,728 square miles (312,685 km<sup>2</sup>).
8. Approximately 39 million people live in Poland.
9. The name "Poland" ("Polska" in Polish) is derived from the tribe name Polanie, meaning "people living in open fields."
10. The city of Warsaw was almost completely destroyed during World War II and was rebuilt using Bernardo Bellotto's 14th-century paintings as a visual guide. So, the city today looks more like a 14th-century than a 20th-century town.
11. In Poland, surnames are gender dependent. A baby boy will be given a surname that ends with "-cka/-cki" and a baby girl, "-ski/-ska". For example, if your father's last name is Kowalski and you are a girl, you will have Kowalska as your last name.
12. The Polish look forward to two dates in the year — their birthday and their name day, (*Imienin*), when they commemorate the saints that they're named after. Some say that it's even more important than your actual birthday, as everyone remembers it. The names that are associated with the *Imienin* are all listed on the calendars in Poland.
13. Poland is the biggest exporter of amber in the world.
14. Polish children are taught at an early age to identify poisonous and edible mushrooms. Picking wild mushrooms in the summer is a popular family activity in the countryside.
15. Polish engineer Ignacy Lukasiewicz invented the first modern streetlamp in 1853. A street in Warsaw still uses the very same lamps that Lukasiewicz made.

16. Known as the Mother of Modern Physics, Marie Curie was born Marie Skłodowska in Warsaw., she was named Marie Skłodowska. Together, she and her French husband, Pierre Curie, discovered radium and polonium. She was not only the first woman to win a Nobel Prize, but she was the first person and the only woman to win the Nobel Prize twice, and one of only two people, and the only woman, to win the Nobel Prize in two scientific fields.
17. Poland's national anthem is "Dąbrowski's Mazurek" and is commonly known as "Jeszcze Polska Nie Zginęła" ("Poland Has Not Yet Perished"). The song's lyrics were written by Józef Wybicki to a folk tune in 1797.
18. Pączki is a Polish pastry shaped in balls and filled with sweet fillings, similar to a jelly doughnut. Traditionally reserved for Fat Tuesday/Mardi Gras, some Christians would indulge in this treat in order to use up their eggs, milk, and butter before Lent. Polish people eat millions of pączkis on this day alone.
19. Mikołaj Kopernik, or Nicolaus Copernicus, was a Polish astronomer and a mathematician. His Heliocentric Theory was the first to propose that the planets revolve around the sun and not the other way around.
20. Since 1903, when Marie Curie won her first award, 18 Poles have been awarded 19 Nobel Prizes. In addition, Poles have been recipients in every categories: Physics, Chemistry, Physiology or Medicine, Literature, Peace, and Economics.
21. Built in the early 13th century, Poland's Wieliczka Salt Mine produced the country's table salt until 2007. At 178 miles (287 km) long and 667 miles (1,073 km) deep, it serves as a tourist attraction today, with 1.2 million visitors each year. The main attraction is "Underground Salt Cathedral of Poland," an entire cathedral carved out from rock salt by the miners. It includes three chapels and a dozen statues.
22. Composer Frédéric François Chopin was born Fryderyk Franciszek Chopin in Żelazowa Wola in the Duchy of Warsaw. He grew up in Warsaw, but at the age of 20 he moved to Paris, where he remained until his death in 1849, at the age of 39. His remains lie in the Père-Lachaise Cemetery in Paris.
23. Pierogi is Poland's version of dumplings and is one of Poland's most recognizable dishes anywhere in the world.
24. Poland's forests are the ideal habitat for many of Europe's endangered species, including brown bears, wild horses, chamois goats, Eurasian lynxes, and the continent's largest population of gray wolves.
25. Białowieża Primeval Forest covers 380,000 acres or 150,000 hectares. As one of the last ancient forests in Europe, it houses around 800 European bison, called wisent, which are the heaviest land animals in Europe. On average, a male bison can weigh up to 990 kg, while females can reach 540 kg. Once extinct in the wild, the wisent was reintroduced using animals bred in captivity.
26. In the spring in Poland, children traditionally make *marzanna*, a straw doll with ribbons, which is set on fire and dropped in the lake. It's a Polish tradition symbolizing the end of winter and welcoming spring.
27. Novelist Joseph Conrad was born Józef Teodor Konrad Korzeniowski, of Polish heritage, in what is now Ukraine, and the family moved to Poland when Conrad was four years old. After traveling the world in the merchant navy, he moved to England and began to write novels;

despite not being fluent in English until his twenties, he is considered one of the greatest prose stylists. He is probably most famous for *Lord Jim* and *Heart of Darkness* (which was made into the film *Apocalypse Now* in the 1970s).

28. Foreign movies are dubbed on Polish TV, with all the parts, men, women, and children, being read by one single man.
29. The Zapiekanka is considered an unofficial traditional food and is similar to the American 'sub' sandwich. It is made from half a baguette, topped with garlic, ketchup, mayo, mushrooms, and cheese.



## Serbia

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3. Although separate countries, Montenegro and Serbia are entwined in Adventist church structure, with Montenegro making up part of the South Conference of the South-East European Union Conference, along with the central and southern portions of Serbia.
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7. A 2011 census in Serbia showed that the predominate religion is Christian; 84.6 percent are adherents of Serbian Orthodoxy, 5 percent are Catholic, and 1 percent Protestant. Islam accounts for 3 percent of the population.

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8. The official name of Serbia is the Republic of Serbia.
9. Serbia is landlocked and shares borders with Bosnia-Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Hungary, the Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro, Romania, and Albania.
10. Serbia's official language is Serbian.
11. The national currency of Serbia is the Serbian dinar.
12. According to the World Bank, in 2020 the population of Serbia was 6.9 million.
13. Belgrade is the capital city of Serbia and is one of the oldest cities in Europe. Since ancient times it has been an important crossroads, where the roads of eastern and western Europe meet.
14. Between the third and fourth centuries, a total of 18 Roman emperors, a fifth of all Roman rulers, were born within the territory of what is modern-day Serbia.
15. Apples are the number one export fruit for Serbia, but raspberries are the most profitable.
16. Đavolja Varoš, also known as the Devil's Town, is a unique rock formation located in south Serbia; 202 rock towers, called "earth pyramids," form the landscape of the area. Volcanic activity and soil erosion in the past led to the creation of these rock formations, which range from 6 to 49 feet (2 to 15 m) tall and 13 to 20 feet (4 to 6 m) wide at the base. The

government of Serbia declared the site as a major natural monument and today it is also one of the Seven Natural Wonders of Serbia.

17. The Đerdap gorge, which is about 62 miles (100 km) long, is actually a compound river valley made up of four gorges, separated from each other by ravines. In one of them, Gospodin vir, one of the greatest river depths in the world has been measured at 269 ft (82 m).
18. The very first video transmission between North America and Europe, which took place in 1963, featured “the White Angel” fresco from the Mileševa monastery in Serbia.
19. Serbians played a major role in the first moon landing. Three Serbians took part in the Apollo project. In addition, a Serbian named Mihajlo Pipin was among the founders of the National Advisory Committee for Aeronautics (NACA), which later became NASA.
20. Three Serbs have won the Pulitzer Prize—Walter Bogdanić, a U.S. research journalist of Serbian background has won it three times; Dušan Simić, known as Charles Simic, is a Serbian American poet; and Mihajlo Idvorski Pupin, also known as Michael Pupin, was a Serbian physicist, physical chemist, and philanthropist based in the United States, and won the prize for his autobiography.
21. On the slopes of Mt. Povlen are large, perfectly round stone globes whose origin is still under debate. Some claim that they have healing and miraculous powers; some claim that they were created by aliens; still others say they will grant wishes. Scientists say they are a result of volcanic activity.
22. The majority of Serbian last names end with ‘ic.’
23. Nikola Tesla was a Serbian-American inventor, electrical engineer, and mechanical engineer, probably best known for his design of the modern alternating current (AC) electricity supply system.
24. Novak Djokovic is a Serbian professional tennis player. He has been ranked world No. 1 for a record total 373 weeks, and has finished as the year-end No. 1 a record seven times. He has won 21 Grand Slam men's singles titles, including a record nine Australian Open titles.
25. Serbia is largely mountainous; the northeast section is extremely fertile, as it is part of the Danubian Plain, which is drained by the Danube, Tisa, Sava, and Morava river systems.
26. The Balkan Peninsula was settled by the Serbs around the sixth or seventh centuries. They adopted Christianity in the ninth century.
27. World War I was sparked by the assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand of Austria in Sarajevo by a Serbian revolutionary. This led to a declaration of war from Austria against Serbia in 1914.
28. *Ramonda serbica*, also known as Serbian ramonda and the Serbian phoenix flower, was discovered by Serbian botanist Josif Pančić in 1874 near Niš, in southern Serbia. Also known as the Desiccation plant, it can be revived when watered, even after being completely dehydrated. In Serbia it is used as a symbol of Armistice Day in World War I.

## **Games**

### **Latvia**

#### **Roosters**

Draw a circle on the ground about 10 feet (3 m) across. Divide the players into two teams which stand in lines on either side of the circle.

One player from each team goes into the circle and stands on one foot, about 4 feet (1 m) from the other player, with their hands behind their back. One hand can be used to hold up the lifted foot, but both hands must stay behind their back.

Someone signals by saying “Roosters” and the players jump on one leg and use their shoulders to either push the other player out of the circle or make them stand on both legs. The winner gets a point for their team, and the game continues until all the players have given it a go. The team with the most points wins.

## Recipes

### Serbia/Montenegro

#### Potica

Potica is a sweet, rolled pastry, or strudel, stuffed with nuts or poppyseeds.

Potica goes by different names in the Balkans.

In Slovenia it is called makova potica,  
In Croatia it is povitica or povetica s makom,  
In Serbia and Montenegro they call it štrudla s makom, and  
In Bosnia and Herzegovina it is makovnjača.

#### Ingredients

1–2 tbsp (15–30 ml) water  
1 tsp (5 ml) active dry yeast  
2 tbsp (30 ml) sugar  
2 ¼ cups (500 mg) all-purpose flour plus a more for dusting  
Pinch of salt  
1 ½ tsp (7.5 ml) baking powder  
½ cup (188 ml) oil  
1 cup (250 ml) lukewarm water  
2 tbsp (30 ml) water to grease the dough  
1 tbsp (15 ml) melted butter to grease the dough  
4–6 tbsp (60–90 ml) confectioner's sugar after baking

#### Filling:

1 ¾ cups plus 1-2 tbsp (444 ml) milk  
1 cup (240 g) poppy seeds very finely ground  
1 cup (128 g) sugar  
¼ cup (57 g) semolina  
2 tsp (10 ml) vanilla extract

#### INSTRUCTIONS

##### Dough:

In a small bowl combine 1–2 tablespoons water, yeast, and sugar. Mix and leave to bubble up for 10–15 minutes.

In a medium bowl, mix together flour, salt, and baking powder. Make an indentation in the flour and add the yeast mixture, oil, and water. Mix and then knead ingredients several minutes until you get a soft ball of dough. Leave to rise for an hour. Make the filling while the dough is rising.

### Filling:

In a medium pot, bring milk to a boil on medium heat, and then bring the temperature down to low. Add sugar, vanilla extract, and ground poppy seeds. Mix well. Stirring continuously, add semolina. Continue stirring and cooking another 1–2 minutes. Turn the stove off, and let the filling rest. When the filling cools down, divide it into two equal parts.

### Assembly:

Heat oven to 355°F (180°C) and dust working area with flour if needed. The dough should be doubled now, so cut it into two equal parts. Take one dough half and roll it out into about an 8x16 inch (20x40 cm) rectangle. Then take half of the filling and spread evenly over the dough rectangle leaving about 1/2 inch (1 cm) of dough at the sides. Roll up the long side and place on a pan about 12 by 17 inches (30 by 43 cm), lined with parchment paper. Repeat with the other half. Mix water and butter and brush rolls with it.

Bake for 10–15 minutes, then turn the pan around and cover the rolls with parchment paper. Bake an additional 25 minutes. (Total baking time is 40 minutes.)

Take the pan out of the oven, and let it cool down. You can cover it with a clean, dry kitchen towel. Dust with confectioner's sugar before serving. To serve, cut into slices.

The roll keeps up to three days. Keep wrapped in kitchen wrap. You can eat leftovers hot or cold.