



YOUTH & ADULT MISSION

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AdventistMission.org

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Your Offerings at Work



Three years ago, part of the Thirteenth Sabbath Offering funded a floating church (pictured with volunteers wearing green shirts, left, and baptismal candidates in gray robes) on the Amazon River in Brazil. Read a mission story about the boat church on page 28.



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Dear Sabbath School Leader,

Andrew McChesney
Editor



This quarter we feature the South American Division, which oversees the Seventh-day Adventist Church's work in Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Ecuador, Falkland Islands, Paraguay, Peru and Uruguay, with adjacent islands in the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans.

The region is home to 340 million people, including 2.48 million Adventists. That's a ratio of one Adventist for 137 people.

This quarter's four Thirteenth Sabbath projects are "centers of influence," places used by Seventh-day Adventist church members to connect with the local community. Three of the centers of influence in Brazil and Peru are on the premises of new Adventist churches. The fourth center of influence is a community center offering English-language classes, music lessons, and other activities to children and teens in Cusco, Peru. The

goal of this community center is to plant a new church in Cusco.

To prepare for this quarter, I interviewed people who live in the four cities that will receive the Thirteenth Sabbath funds, as well as people blessed by the division's previous Thirteenth Sabbath Offering three years ago. You can find their stories on the pages of this publication and the Children's Mission magazine. After hearing their stories, I'm sure that you will join me in declaring that Jesus indeed is coming soon!

Special Features

If you want to make your Sabbath School class come alive in a special way, visit our Facebook page at the link: facebook.com/missionquarterlies. Every week, we post additional materials to go with each mission story.

This quarterly contains just a sample of the latest mission stories from the South American Division. For more stories, visit bit.ly/sad-archive, which will take you to all the division stories. At this link, you can also search by country and theme.

You also can download the PDF version of the Children's Mission magazine at bit.ly/childrenmission, and Mission Spotlight videos at bit.ly/missionspotlight. A printable mission bank image can be downloaded at bit.ly/bank-coloring-page.

If you have found especially effective ways to share mission stories, please let me know at mcchesney@gc.adventist.org.

Thank you for encouraging others to be mission minded!

Opportunities

The Thirteenth Sabbath Offering this quarter will help:

- Plant a church and health-focused community center in Aruana, Brazil
- Acquire property for a church and community center in Salvador, Brazil
- Open a youth-focused community center with English-language school in Cusco, Peru
- Establish a church and medical center in Pucallpa, Peru

Bible-Carrying City Folk

PERU | April 6

Alejandro Qquerar, 52



Alejandro entered the first grade at the age of 18.

Some people might think that he started school late, but all 18-year-olds in his village, Ccacacollo, began first grade at that time in the 1980s. Villagers thought it was more important for their children to work on the farm than to get an education.

A classmate brought a radio to school, and Alejandro listened attentively to a religious program about the world's last days. He was scared. He wanted to know more.

His wish was fulfilled a short time later when the evangelical producers of the radio program organized nightly meetings in the school's gymnasium. As he listened to the preacher speak about Jesus' soon coming, his heart filled with joy.

Other villagers also enjoyed the

meetings, and the program organizers opened a church for them. Alejandro and his friends attended the Sunday worship services whenever they could get away from farm work.

The four church leaders saw the great spiritual interest of the villagers and resolved to present each with a Bible. So, they made the 60-minute bus trip to the nearest city, Cusco, and scoured the city for Bibles. But no success.

Despairing, the four leaders were walking down one of Cusco's cobblestoned streets one morning when they noticed a stream of people, each carrying a Bible, entering a building. Thinking that the building might be a bookstore with a large supply of Bibles, the leaders followed them in. It was a Seventh-day Adventist church, and the people were going to Sabbath School.

The leaders stayed for Sabbath School and the divine worship service. They were invited to lunch and then studied the Bible with church members in the afternoon. The men were thrilled with what they learned. They turned to one another and said, "We only knew half of the end-time message. These people know the whole story."

The men decided on the spot to become Adventists. They asked the pastor for

Story Tips

- Pronounce Alejandro as: all-aye-KHAN-dro
- Pronounce the name of Alejandro's village, Ccacacollo, as: kaka-KOLO
- Find photos for this story at the link: bit.ly/fb-mq
- Know that Alejandro, like many villagers in Peru, only speaks Quechua (pronounced: KETCH-wa). To interview him, Adventist Mission needed two interpreters: one to interpret from Quechua to Spanish, and another to interpret from Spanish to English
- Share that the Cusco church with the Bible-carrying members has been a big support to Alejandro, providing food, money, and religious materials for his outreach efforts
- Watch a video of Alejandro at the link: bit.ly/Alejandro-Qquerar

help explaining the full Bible truth to the people back in the village. Two church members accompanied the men to the village and preached in their church the next day, on Sunday.

Alejandro missed the worship service because he was working on the farm. But his friends told him not to bother going to church the next Sunday. The church had become Seventh-day Adventist and its next worship services would be on Saturday.

Alejandro went on Saturday to find out what had happened. He was convicted with the new truths that he heard, including God's instructions in the Garden of Eden and through the Fourth

Commandment to keep the seventh-day Sabbath. He became an Adventist.

Alejandro, who was now 19, soon dropped out of school to work full-time on the farm. He also began to tell anyone who would listen that Jesus is coming soon.

His love for Jesus has brought extraordinary results. Alejandro, a simple man of short stature and limited education, has planted six churches over the past 30 years. He planted the first church in 1985, shortly after his baptism, and has planted a new church every three to five years since. Sometimes he walks five hours to reach one of his church plants. More than 800 people have been baptized through his influence.

Alejandro, now 52, praises God for the results but says real credit belongs to the faithful Adventists who carried their Bibles to church in Cusco one Sabbath morning.

"I think that it's important that we always have a Bible in our hands when we go to church because other people can see then that we are Christians," he said. "If the Seventh-day Adventists in Cusco hadn't been carrying Bibles that day, my village may have never found the true church."

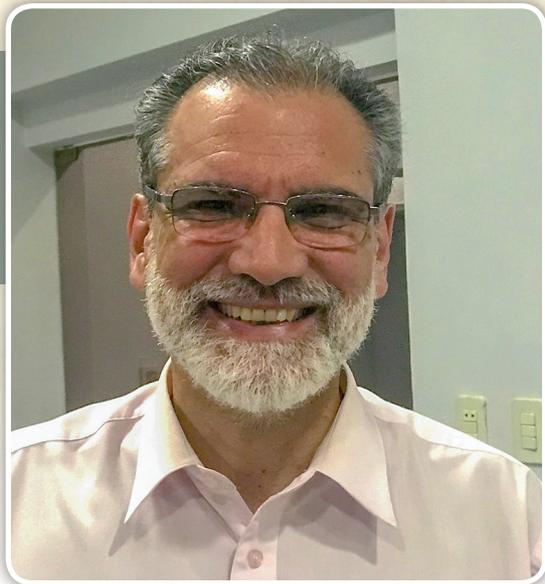
His village, which has 500 inhabitants, is largely Adventist today. Its church has 300 baptized members. 🌍

Part of this quarter's Thirteenth Sabbath Offering will help open a Cusco community center that will offering English classes, music lessons, and other activities to children and young people. The goal of the community center is to plant a new church in the area. Thank you for your mission offering.

By Andrew McChesney

Scared to Plant

Hugo Sanz, 64



Hugo Sanz was scared when the pastor asked him to plant a church in an unreached neighborhood in Paraguay's capital, Asunción.

The silver-haired insurance director at Asunción Adventist Hospital had worked for 20 years with fellow church members at the Central Seventh-day Adventist Church, the city's largest church with about 300 members. But he had never worked with people outside the church.

"I was afraid," he said. "I didn't feel capable to run a church alone."

Hugo spoke with his wife, who had some experience with people of other faiths after working with the Adventist Development and Relief Agency. She agreed to help.

Hugo prayed for several weeks and felt a growing sense of guilt as he realized that the site of the proposed church in the Nueva Sajonia neighborhood was located only two blocks from his home. He agreed to oversee the church-planting effort.

"I started this out of guilt," he said.

"But with the help of another people, we did it. We came here, saw the need, and started working."

The first steps were small. Hugo rented a building, a "center of influence," and organized seminars such as healthy cooking classes and stop-smoking courses with help from fellow church members from the hospital. He and other church members befriended people in the neighborhood.

Word began to spread about the new community center. A church member created a Facebook page and posted photos. Radio Nuevo Tiempo, the local affiliate of the Adventist Church's Hope Channel radio, provided advertising.

After a year, in 2015, the center of influence began to hold regular Saturday meetings called "One Day Away From the World."

"This is one day when people can forget their stress and focus on the Bible," Hugo said. "We sang and studied the Bible together, and people who had attended

Story Tips

- Pronounce Asunción as: ah-soon-SYAWN
- Pronounce Nueva Sajonia as: nyo-va sa-KHON-ia
- Watch a video of Hugo at the link: bit.ly/Hugo-Sanz
- Find photos for this story at the link: bit.ly/fb-mq

Mission Post

- Paraguay has 61 churches, 95 companies, and 12,519 members. In a population of 31,838,000, one in 544 people is an Adventist.
- The first Adventist worker to visit Paraguay was Lionel Brooking, a colporteur, who sold books in the Gran Chaco of Paraguay in 1892. In August 1900, E.W. Snyder and his wife arrived from the United States. Adventist canvassers had reported that a German at Colonia Nacional (National Colony), Paraguay, had accepted Adventist teachings through reading a German paper sent to him by his brother in Uruguay.

our health seminars realized that we are healthy because of the Bible. They started praying to God.”

While studying the Bible, community members expressed surprise about the practical health advice on its pages. They learned that good health can be found through a proper diet and also through prayer, peace, and Jesus. One of their favorite Bible verses is 3 John 2, which says, “Beloved, I pray that you may

prosper in all things and be in health, just as your soul prospers.” Another favorite is Philippians 4:7, which says, “And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.”

A series of overnight burglaries disrupted work at the community center in 2016. Four times thieves broke the glass windows and stole electronics, chairs, and tables. The seminars were moved to Hugo’s home.

That same year, the Adventist world church collected a Thirteenth Sabbath Offering to help the community center grow into a church. With the money, the local Adventist Church purchased the community center site, expanded and updated its facilities, and improved security.

The new Nueva Sajonia Seventh-day Adventist Church and community center opened in 2018 with its own pastor. Hugo remains a lay leader — and he said he couldn’t be happier.

“I worked for the Adventist Church for 20 years, but the few years here have been the happiest in my life because I have worked with people in the world,” said Hugo, 64. “Before, I worked for people already in church. But now I’m not just talking but also doing, and showing God’s love in a new way. I feel like I’m fulfilling the mission that God has for my life.”

Thank you for your Thirteenth Sabbath Offering in first quarter 2016 that helped plant Nueva Sajonia Seventh-day Adventist Church in Asunción, Paraguay. Thank you for your mission offerings that support mission work around the world. 🌍

By Andrew McChesney

No Peace in Meditation

PARAGUAY | April 20

Gustavo Javier Caballero, 40



The spiritual guide led Gustavo into a room to communicate with dead people in Paraguay's capital, Asunción.

"They will give some answers that you need," the spiritual guide said.

Gustavo desperately wanted answers. He struggled to sleep at night and was meditating twice a day — an hour in the morning and an hour in the evening — to cope with stress. The meditation offered peace for a while, but then the stress returned a hundredfold.

With the spiritual guide, he heard distorted voices, yelling, in the room. He saw people walking around and disappearing. They resembled demons.

Seeing his fright, the spiritual guide said, "Don't worry. They won't hurt you. They will only examine your mind and your feelings."

After the experience, Gustavo looked

back on his life. His parents, who belonged to another Christian denomination, enrolled him in a Seventh-day Adventist school at the age of 12 at the recommendation of a neighbor. He showed little interest in the school's Bible classes, and neighborhood friends introduced him to alcohol and drugs during his senior year.

Gustavo used marijuana, alcohol, and cocaine on weekends to ease his worries. But then he started to suffer constant headaches and nausea. He went to a psychologist for help, and she recommended Eastern meditation.

Gustavo found the spiritual guide at an Eastern temple and learned meditation and yoga. To meditate, he repeated a phrase from a dead Indian language again and again. This was supposed to relax him and connect him to a peaceful place where his mind went blank.

Life seemed to improve for a while. But then he began to hear voices and see apparitions during the meditation-induced trances. "I was going crazy," Gustavo said. "I needed someone to help me."

He sought help from the spiritual guide, who frightened him by taking him to meet supposedly dead people.

It was then that Gustavo remembered studying the Bible at the Adventist school. He contacted an Adventist pastor and an Adventist mental health worker

Story Tips

- Pronounce Asunción as: ah-soon-SYAWN
- Pronounce Nueva Sajonia as: nyo-va sa-KHON-ia
- Watch a video of Gustavo at the link: bit.ly/Gustavo-Caballero
- Find photos for this story at the link: bit.ly/fb-mq

Fast Facts

- Paraguay's literacy rate is higher than that of the United States. Paraguay's citizens age 15 and older read and write at a 94 percent literacy rate, compared to 86 percent for the U.S.

for help. They prayed with him and advised him to give up meditating, yoga, and drugs. Gustavo started attending church every Sabbath.

Meditation and yoga proved easy to stop, but the drug use was more difficult. As Gustavo struggled, he prayed and found help in the Bible. On sleepless nights, he claimed Isaiah 26:3, which says, "You will keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on You, because he trusts in You." He also claimed Philippians 4:13, which promises, "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me."

Gustavo gave his heart to Jesus and was baptized at the age of 34. "I was looking for a cure, for someone to help me feel better," he said. "In church, I found out that I'm God's son. I was freed by His life."

After baptism, he found a video presentation about "Christian meditation"

and decided to try it. He found that the technique mirrored Eastern meditation but, instead of repeating the phrase in the dead Indian language, he repeated words from the Bible. The results shocked him.

"I lost control of my mind, and it went blank like before," he said. "I felt an energy surging through my body, and I heard voices telling me what to do."

Gustavo was frozen, unable to move, until he came out of the trance.

Afterward, several old friends told Gustavo that voices had instructed them during their own meditations that day to invite him to meditate like before.

Gustavo resolved never to meditate that way again. Instead, he said, he chooses to "read the Bible and meditate on His word, not doing Eastern-style meditation. That is a dangerous place. God is not guiding that kind of meditation."

He also is convinced that yoga is a tool of the devil.

"With yoga, you feel good, and you don't need to read the Bible or have Jesus in your life," he said. "You think that spirits are working within you and that is enough."

Today, Gustavo is 40 and works as a literature evangelist and massage therapist. He also is an active participant of a community center attached to Nueva Sajonia Seventh-day Adventist Church, a 2016 Thirteenth Sabbath project.

He tells people in the neighborhood that drugs and meditation aren't the answer.

"Getting high and meditating feels good for a while, but then you feel worse," he said. "The only solution is Christ. Only when you pray do you feel better — and have real peace." 🌍

By Andrew McChesney



Why Was I Born?

Graciela Musetti, 52

A woman stood at the bus stop in Uruguay's capital, Montevideo.

She had money in her purse for a special purpose, and she was waiting for the bus.

Suddenly, she began to tremble. She felt something move inside her.

The bus arrived and stopped, but she turned away. Instead, she crossed the street to a bakery and used some of the money to buy cookies.

At home, her husband met her at the door. "Back so soon?" he asked.

"Yes, I decided not to do it," she said.

Several months later, Graciela Musetti was born.

Graciela's mother, Maria, never allowed her daughter to forget that day.

Unusual Childhood

Graciela grew up playing among tombstones.

When she was 18 months old, her 18-year-old sister died in a tragic factory fire that killed about 20 people. Every day, Mother took Graciela to the

cemetery and, as she mourned at her older daughter's grave, Graciela darted between the tombstones. The little girl took flowers from graves with large bouquets and placed them on empty graves.

At home, Mother introduced Graciela to visitors by saying, "God took one daughter away from me and gave me this one instead." Then she told the story about the bus stop, treating it lightly, like a joke. "Graciela wasn't supposed to be born," she said, smiling.

Graciela felt guilty and insecure. She felt like she had replaced a sister who was the light of the house. Several years passed, and her parents divorced. Graciela had a son at the age of 15. Then her eldest brother died of a heart attack. The death devastated Mother, and for several months Graciela accompanied her to the cemetery to visit his grave.

A few more years passed, and Graciela's only remaining sibling, another older brother, was struck dead by a car as he rode his bicycle. Graciela didn't have the heart to tell her mother. She felt like the sole survivor of a major tragedy.

Mother grew old, and Graciela cared for her until she died. In her last years, Mother was bedridden after suffering a stroke.

One day, Graciela stumbled across Nuevo Tiempo radio, the local affiliate

of the Seventh-day Adventist Church's Hope radio. Listening to a program, she was drawn to the pastor's voice, which she found peaceful and calming.

At the same time, she listened to a pastor on another radio station who attacked Adventist Church cofounder Ellen White much of the time. His anger caught Graciela's attention, and she decided that she wanted to read an Ellen White book. But where to find one?

Graciela visited libraries and bookstores, but nobody had any books.

One day, her adult son visited a shoe store and noticed a book lying on the chair. He glanced through it and brought it to his mother. "Look, Mother, this is something that you will like," he said.

A Book From God

Graciela took the book into her hands and read the title, "The Great Hope." Underneath, she saw the author's name, Ellen White. She began to tremble.

"This is the Lord acting in my life!" she exclaimed. "He has sent me this book!"

From that moment, Graciela had no doubts about Ellen White — even before she read the book. "God used the book to call me to His way," Graciela said.

She telephoned Nuevo Tiempo for more information, and the radio station sent an Adventist church member, Miguel Amaro Speranza, to give Bible studies.

Soon Graciela was baptized into La Teja Seventh-day Adventist Church, a church funded by a 2016 Thirteenth Sabbath Offering. Today, she is an active church member, giving Bible studies and helping people in her neighborhood. Through her influence, four people have been baptized.

Graciela wondered much of her life why she was born. Now she has the answer.

Story Tips

- Pronounce Graciela as: gras-EE-yela
- Pronounce Montevideo as: Mon-teh-vi-DAY-oh
- Watch a video of Graciela at the link: bit.ly/Graciela-Musetti
- Find photos for this story at the link: bit.ly/fb-mq

Mission Post

- Uruguay has 59 churches and 50 companies. There are 7,890 members in Uruguay's population of 3,457,000, or one Adventist for every 438 Uruguayans.
- The first Adventist in Uruguay was Mrs. Juan Rivoir, who came to Uruguay with her husband in 1890 and who, four years before her arrival, had listened to sermons by Ellen White in Piedmont, Italy.

"Since the moment that I was in my mother's womb, the Lord was working with me," said Graciela, 52. "If my mother had had the abortion, who would have taken care of her? Who would take care of my father, who is now 94 and bedridden?"

"God is always in control of everything," she said. "I don't know what He saw in me, but He saved me. I hope to make more disciples for Him."

Thank you for your 2016 Thirteenth Sabbath Offering that helped La Teja Seventh-day Adventist Church move from a small, rented house into its own church building and community center. Thank you for your mission offerings that help lead people like Graciela to Christ. 🌍

By Andrew McChesney

Longing for God



URUGUAY | May 4

Maria Cecilia Freire, 60

But she stopped going to church. With three children to raise, she needed to work. Unable to find a cooking job with Saturdays off, she stopped keeping the Sabbath.

Years passed, and her children grew up and got married. But Cecilia remained bitter about the divorce. Her bitterness grew when her mother died.

Moving Home

Then Cecilia moved to Uruguay's capital, Montevideo, to live with her eldest daughter, son-in-law, and three grandchildren. She began to think about God and wished that an Adventist church was located in her neighborhood.

Somehow, she started listening to Nuevo Tiempo radio, the local affiliate of the Adventist Church's Hope radio.

"I can't explain how I started listening to the radio," she said. "It was just something from God that I found the radio station."

One day while listening, she heard that an Adventist church would open just 13 blocks from her home. She walked into the Goes Seventh-day Adventist Church on Jan. 1, 2017, shortly after it officially opened. She wanted to start the new year with God. She also wanted to be baptized immediately, but the pastor advised her to refresh her knowledge of the Bible. She was baptized five months later, on May 18.

Cecilia was devastated when her husband left.

She was 30, fighting uterine cancer, and suffering dreadful pain. She wondered whether her husband had gotten a divorce because she, doubled over in pain, hadn't allowed him to touch her for months.

But her mother had other ideas. She blamed the divorce on her daughter's decision to join the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Cecilia had been baptized several years earlier during a Seventh-day Adventist evangelistic campaign in her hometown, Mercedes, in Uruguay. After being baptized, Cecilia stopped going to parties and drinking alcohol with her husband.

"You lost your husband because of the church," her mother said.

Fortunately, Cecilia had a successful operation and her cancer was removed.

“From that day on, I am very happy,” Cecilia said. “God has changed my life. He has taken me away from a life of pain and bitterness.”

She knew that God was removing her bitterness when she started to smile. Even the church members have noticed and say, “You are very smiley!”

She replies, “I’m very happy!”

Praying for Family

After returning to church, Cecilia started praying for her daughter and son-in-law to accept Jesus. As she prayed, she noticed that a church member, a Brazilian missionary, spoke fluent English. Her son-in-law, an architect who spoke no English, was looking for a language teacher because he wanted to move abroad to work. With the permission of the Brazilian missionary, Cecilia told her son-in-law that she had found an English-language teacher at church.

“This way I brought him into contact with the church,” Cecilia said. “He became friends with the pastor and others in church and got involved in the church.”

Her daughter proved more difficult to reach. Every time Cecilia mentioned God, the daughter complained, “You’re trying to get me into that church again!”

Finally, Cecilia told her daughter, “It is not that. It’s just that after I die, I want us to meet again when I open my eyes.”

The words touched the daughter’s heart. She and her husband are taking Bible studies in preparation for baptism.

“God has done wonderful things in my life,” Cecilia said.

Cecilia, 60, belongs to Goes Seventh-day Adventist Church, which received part of a 2016 Thirteenth Sabbath

Story Tips

- Pronounce Montevideo as: Mon-teh-vi-DAY-oh
- Pronounce Goes, a two-syllable word, as: GO-es
- Watch a video of Cecilia speaking beside the baptismal pool where she was baptized at Goes Seventh-day Adventist Church. The link: bit.ly/Cecilia-Freire
- Find photos for this story at the link: bit.ly/fb-mq

Fast Facts

- The Guaraní word “Uruguay” means “river of the painted birds.”
- The national dish of Uruguay is a sandwich called Chivito. It is made with thinly sliced steak (churrasco), mozzarella, tomatoes, mayonnaise, olives, and hard-boiled eggs, and is served in a bun. It is often eaten with french fries.
- Uruguay has a literacy rate of 98.1 percent for adults, thanks to the provision of free, compulsory education. In 2009, it became the first nation in the world to provide every school child with free wireless Internet and a laptop.
- Uruguay is the only country in South America where tap water is safe to drink.
- Around 95 percent of the electricity is generated from renewable resources, mainly from wind farms.

Offering to acquire a church building in Montevideo, Uruguay. Thank you for your faithfulness with mission offerings, which help prepare people like Cecilia and her family for Christ’s soon return. 🌍

By Andrew McChesney



On Fire for Jesus

Miguel Amaro Speranza, 69

Miguel is 69 and bursting with energy. Not long ago, Miguel accepted an invitation from a friend, Yraldino “Dino” Fernandez, to lead Bible studies in Dino’s home in the impoverished La Teja district of Uruguay’s capital, Montevideo.

Miguel and Dino also gave Bible studies at people’s homes in the district, a place where the Seventh-day Adventist Church had no church building.

After a year, the Bible-study participants were invited to a Daniel and Revelation evangelistic series. Sixteen people were baptized.

“Following the meetings, we decided to plant a church,” Miguel said.

Miguel, several other church members, and the 16 new members rented a house and worshipped there every Sabbath.

Church attendance grew as church members reached out to the neighborhood with food and clothing. The rented space grew cramped, and church members looked for ways to expand the church building and their impact on the community.

The problem was solved when Adventists around the world helped La Teja Seventh-day Adventist Church purchase its own building and lifestyle center through a Thirteenth Sabbath Offering in 2016.

Miguel is thrilled about the new opportunities now available to the church.

“Our plan is to serve the people in the neighborhood, including the homeless,” he said in an interview in the church’s kitchen, where healthy cooking classes are held. “Many impoverished people live around here.”

Story Two

This wasn’t Miguel’s first time to win souls for Christ. He and a group of church members from El Prado Seventh-day Adventist Church used to travel regularly to a squatter settlement comprised largely of crude cardboard-box shelters in a dangerous part of Montevideo.

“Five of us gave 25 Bible studies every Sabbath,” Miguel said. “We also brought food. We tried to reach the people and provide for their needs.”

Church members provided ongoing assistance to 47 adults and 90 children. They also constructed a house where people could find shelter from rising floodwater during the rainy season.

People from the settlement started going

to the Adventist church. Some arrived by horse and cart.

“As a result of the work, we had 21 baptisms,” Miguel said.

Story Three

Miguel worked 27 years with the Adventist Development and Relief Agency in Uruguay, and one of his fondest memories is of Walter, a homeless man with diabetes and no legs who showed up at an ADRA center in Montevideo.

Walter had no food and no place to go, and Miguel became acquainted with him and, at his request, gave Bible studies.

One day as Miguel was preparing a Sabbath sermon while cooking, Walter asked, “What will you preach about?”

Miguel explained that the inspiration for the sermon came from a picture posted on his refrigerator door. The picture showed a child fishing food out of the garbage and posed the question, “What are you complaining about?”

Opening his Bible, Miguel read Luke 9:13, where Jesus told His disciples, “You give them something to eat.” Jesus gave the command shortly before the miracle of the loaves and fish.

Miguel returned to his cooking, and Walter busily wrote on a piece of paper. After a while, Walter handed the paper to Miguel. “If this is useful, I give this to you for the sermon,” he said.

Miguel read the message during the sermon. The church members wept.

Walter had written as if Jesus were writing to people. The message said, “You are complaining, but look: Around you live people who are homeless, without food, and without clothing. You have a place to rest, food, and clothing.”

Walter then wrote about himself,

Story Tips

- Pronounce Montevideo as: Mon-teh-vi-DAY-oh
- Watch a video of Miguel speaking in the sanctuary of La Teja Seventh-day Adventist Church at the link: bit.ly/Miguel-Speranza
- Find photos for this story at the link: bit.ly/fb-mq

Mission Post

- The first Seventh-day Adventist school in Uruguay was organized in 1908, in Nueva Helvecia colony in the home of Julio Ernst, with Otto Heydeker as teacher. Uruguay Academy, now Uruguay Adventist Academy (Instituto Adventista del Uruguay) situated at Progreso, was founded in 1944.

“I used to have friends who drank and danced with me. But now they complain about their problems, and I say, ‘What are you complaining about? Look at me. I have diabetes and no legs.’”

Months later, Walter gave his heart to Jesus. Coming out of the baptismal waters, he shouted, “Thank you, Jesus!”

Miguel still hears Walter’s triumphant shout today. A month and a half after the baptism, Walter passed away. “I hope to see him again when our heavenly Father comes to take us home,” Miguel said. “I hope to reunite with him and with all those whom God has given us the opportunity to share the gospel.”

Thank you for your 2016 Thirteenth Sabbath Offering for La Teja church. 🌍

By Andrew McChesney

Born to Be a Missionary

ARGENTINA | May 18

Marcelo Fernandez



photo: Pixabay

My wife and I prayed for a child for 14 years.

“If it is Your will, let us have our own children or help us to adopt,” we prayed.

After a series of tests, our physician declared that our chances of having children were slim. It also became clear that it would be difficult to adopt children in our home country, Argentina.

Then an opportunity arose to work for God in a closed country far away, and we thought, “Maybe God wants us to adopt a child in another country.”

All the pieces fell into place. The Seventh-day Adventist Church’s South American Division, whose territory includes Argentina, said “yes” to our desire to move abroad for five years. The church leaders in the closed country said “yes,” and the relevant government authorities also said “yes.”

Then my wife, Elisa, learned that she was pregnant.

Elisa, who has a sense of humor, set up a hidden camera to record my reaction as she broke the news over breakfast.

She gave me a small box, which at first I thought was empty. But then I saw a pregnancy test inside. I took it out and saw that it was positive.

A confusing mixture of shock and happiness overwhelmed me. The video recording shows that I froze. I didn’t even hug my wife. I only stared at the pregnancy test in my hand.

My mind was racing. “Why now, God?” I thought. “This is the weirdest timing ever. Now the government authorities will say ‘no.’ The church leaders in the closed country will say ‘no.’ The South American Division will say ‘no.’ A child will be too expensive and disrupt our work.”

God’s Perfect Timing

But God’s timing is perfect.

Nobody objected to my wife’s pregnancy. Even the government authorities, in reply to a worried query, said, “No problem. We love children.”

Our son, Ezekiel, was born three months after we arrived in the closed country. He has opened at least 80 percent of the doors to help us be good witnesses for God.

We quickly learned that the local people love children. And if you are a foreigner, it’s even better. People will

stop you everywhere to take a photo. Grandparents, carrying around their grandchildren, will reach out to you to know more and to share parenting tips.

We have more opportunities to sow seeds than we ever could have imagined. Wherever we go, people gather around Ezekiel.

Through our son, we have befriended people in our apartment building, at supermarkets, and in parks. We invite our new friends to birthday parties and other celebrations in our home. Many parents want their children to interact more with our son, so they ask whether they can come to our son's Sabbath School class. One married couple in our building has a same-aged daughter, and they visit us often. We have presented their girl with an English-language children's Bible.

The way that we treat our child is having a bigger impact than we ever dreamed. God gave us a well-behaved son. People see that we hug him and how happy he is. They see God's love even better.

Surprise No. 2

An amazing thing happened just as we were rejoicing over Ezekiel's powerful ability to witness. My wife got pregnant again, and then she gave birth to a girl.

For the local people, having a son and a daughter is wonderful. Random people stop us on the street to explain again and again that the combination of having a boy and a girl is perfection. We smile, thank them, and point to God as the perfect picture of perfection.

What a witness!

Jesus said in Matthew 24:14, "And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations, and then the end will come."

Story Tips

- Names have been changed in the story to protect the family's work in a sensitive region. For that reason, no video is available this week
- Find a photo for this story at the link: bit.ly/fb-mq

Mission Post

- Argentina has 606 churches and 438 companies. There are 116,391 church members — one for every 381 people in the country.
- The first Adventists in Argentina were four families who came to Diamante, Entre Rios Province, from Tampa in the U.S. state of Kansas in early 1890. These were German farmers who had been colonists in Russia and had become Adventists while living in the United States.
- In July 1896, the first Adventist camp meeting in Argentina was held in Crespo, Entre Rios; 150 people attended.

Our witness speaks louder than our words. I think God wants us to be living witnesses, and He is giving us a chance to experience this in a deeper way.

God is using my son to fulfill Matthew 24:14 and pave the way for the Second Coming. I think Ezekiel already has more stars in his crown than my wife or me.

I feel so blessed that God shows us sinners that His plans are always better. The Lord says in Isaiah 55:8, "For My thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways My ways."

God's plans are perfect. 🌍

By Marcelo Fernandez, as told to Andrew McChesney

Adopting Two Boys

ARGENTINA | May 25

Juan and Juanita



Children kept knocking on the door of Juan and Juanita's house on the compound of the Seventh-day Adventist hospital in Africa.

Juan and Juanita, married medical volunteers from Argentina doing a one-year mission term, were living on a small stipend, but they gladly shared rice and other simple foods from their kitchen.

Then it struck Juan and Juanita. Some of the children weren't hungry at all and seemed to have other challenges, perhaps emotional needs.

"We asked ourselves if we were really helping them," Juan said.

Determined to understand the children better, Juan and Juanita visited the village of a teenager who did odd jobs for them. The teen's own home astonished them. He had two little brothers, ages 3 and 5, who lived alone. Moreover, it was winter, and the boys were ill.

The teen wasn't home for much of the day, and the couple decided that asking him to give medicine to his little brothers

daily would be too much to expect. Remembering that they had an extra room at home, they took the small boys back to the hospital compound. They invited the brothers to stay for the 10 days needed to complete the treatment.

As the boys' health improved, Juan and Juanita learned that they had no father. Their mother was working far away and could not send for them. Juan and Juanita decided to keep caring for the two boys.

The couple helped the boys with their basic needs, enrolled them in the Adventist school, and took them to Sabbath School.

During family worship, the boys heard stories from the Bible, and they especially identified with miracles such as how God's people were led out of slavery in Exodus.

Despite their young age, the boys even took the initiative to help with chores. One morning Juanita woke up to find the 5-year-old in the kitchen, standing on the tips of his toes at the sink, washing dishes.

"He smiled at my wife and said he knew we were tired and just wanted to help out to let us rest a bit longer," Juan said.

Time passed, and Juan and Juanita longed to meet the boys' mother. They thought that she must be very loving and honorable to have such noble sons.

When the couple's one-year term with Adventist Volunteer Services ended, they made arrangements for the boys to live with local friends.

Story Tips

- Adventist Mission is not disclosing the real identities of Juan and Juanita, or the country where this story took place, because the couple are career medical missionaries who work in sensitive parts of the world. They asked that their names not be published to avoid hindering future work. For that reason, no video is available this week
- Find a picture that Juan drew for this story on the opposite page and at the link: bit.ly/fb-mq

After a while, Juan and Juanita returned for a new mission term and learned that the teenage brother had died. His mother had taken away her young sons.

Juan tracked down the mother and visited her and her sons.

“It was a blessing to find them,” Juan said. “She is a lovely person. We spent time with her. The boys were shy because we hadn’t seen them for some time.”

When their second mission term ended, the couple decided to visit the reunited family one last time. Juan spent about a week with them, building a friendship with the mother as he helped her with legal paperwork and other practical issues. Juanita had to work during the week but joined them on the weekend.

Together, the couple presented the family with a box of children’s Bible books with beautiful illustrations, a Bible for each family member in their native language, and Ellen White’s “The Great Controversy.” Under a tree, they led a special Sabbath School class and church service for the community, and then said goodbye.

“It was a beautiful moment because we felt that a chapter in our lives had closed,” Juan said. “We pray that the Lord will water the seeds that have been sown.”

The African experience changed the hearts of Juan and Juanita. They noticed that Ellen White wasn’t only a prolific author with prophetic insights. She also had a living faith, practicing what she preached by caring for needy children in her own home.

“For me this was revolutionary,” Juan said. “Many times you see missionaries working in the community, but how often do they bring the mission work to their homes?”

Missionaries who do this can entertain unseen angels, Juan said, pointing to a favorite passage in Ellen White’s “Desire of Ages,” page 639: “As you open your door to Christ’s needy and suffering ones, you are welcoming unseen angels. You invite the companionship of heavenly beings. They bring a sacred atmosphere of joy and peace. They come with praises upon their lips, and an answering strain is heard in heaven. Every deed of mercy makes music there. The Father from His throne numbers the unselfish workers among His most precious treasures.”

Juan — who was 30 when he and Juanita helped the boys and is now 34 — appealed to Adventists to be vulnerable and to practice the gospel by bringing the mission work to their homes and, by God’s grace, reaching people’s hearts.

“This was a heart-changing experience for me,” said Juan, who grew up as a missionary kid. “I felt like I turned into a missionary in the mission field. I was no longer a missionary kid, but a missionary myself.”🌍

By Andrew McChesney

New Year's Wish



BRAZIL | June 1

Beatriz de Jesus Santana, 23

Young people raised glasses of wine as they made wishes to God at a New Year's Eve party on a sandy beach on Brazil's Itaparica Island.

"God, I want a year filled with blessings," said one.

"I want to get rich," said another.

"I want to find love," chimed in a third.

Beatriz de Jesus Santana listened as her friends spoke on the Aratuba Beach, a popular hangout located an hour by ferry from her home in Salvador, a city of 3 million people. She wondered how drinking and partying was improving her life. Then she spoke.

"I don't want to ask God for anything," she said. "I just want to thank God for everything that has happened this year. I got a university scholarship and a good internship at an engineering company. So many good things have happened."

The next Monday at work, Beatriz didn't

feel so well. She was exhausted after the holiday weekend.

Her boss, Ana Christina, sympathetically sat down beside her and pulled out her cell phone. On it, she played a three-minute video.

Beatriz watched with interest as she saw a pastor speak about Jesus. The pastor didn't speak like her friends.

The next morning, Beatriz received another three-minute video from Ana Christina via WhatsApp on her cell phone. Another short video arrived the following day. Beatriz watched each video and was amazed by the pastor's peaceful demeanor. She lived with her divorced father, who drank heavily, and the two often quarreled. The arguments were a main reason that Beatriz had begun to party and drink.

After several days, Beatriz googled the pastor's name. She learned that the pastor, Ivan Saraiva, hosted the Portuguese-language "It Is Written" television program on Novo Tempo television, the Brazilian affiliate of the Seventh-day Adventist Church's Hope Channel.

Beatriz began watching the "It Is Written" broadcasts, and she followed along in her Bible to verify that the pastor spoke the truth. She was astonished when she heard about the Ten Commandments and the seventh-day Sabbath.

After three weeks of studying the Bible with the television program, Beatriz asked

Story Tips

- Watch a video of Beatriz at the link: bit.ly/Beatriz-Santana
- Find photos for this story at the link: bit.ly/fb-mq

Mission Post

- Brazil has 9,006 churches and 8,813 companies. With 1,666,125 members, that's one member for every 125 people in Brazil.
- In 1939, Adventist medical work was established in Brazil, with the foundation of Boa Vista Clinic (Good View Clinic) under the direction of Dr. Antonio Alves de Miranda. In 1942 the clinic was replaced by Casa de Saude Liberdade (Sao Paulo Adventist Hospital), under the direction of Dr. Galdino Nunes Vieira, a university teacher who left his job to dedicate himself to medical missionary work.

God to forgive her for her past life. She opened her heart to God and, for the first time, believed that He was listening when she prayed.

Beatriz searched for a church to attend. A friend invited her to a Sunday church, but she remembered the fourth commandment about the seventh-day Sabbath and wondered why her friend's church didn't obey the Bible.

Ana Christina saw Beatriz's new relationship with God and invited her to the Sharing Jesus house church, where dozens of people gather in small groups to study the Bible on Sabbaths and other days of the week.

Beatriz immediately fell in love with the house church. "I was hugged, and I felt welcomed," she said. "I felt peace."

She also was surprised about how she was treated, and she wondered, "Why do those people care so much about me? They don't know me, but they tell me, 'Have a great day!' They want to know about my knowledge of the Bible and how I am studying it. They care about me before they know who I really am."

Two young people at the church — Amanda and Vitor — gave Bible studies to Beatriz every Sabbath. Finally, Beatriz gave her heart to Jesus and was baptized in a swimming pool in the yard of the house church. Ana Christina wept with joy at the sight.

Today, Beatriz is praying for her father, mother, and older brother to accept Jesus. Her brother is already studying the Bible with "It Is Written."

"I didn't used to believe in miracles," Beatriz said. "I thought miracles were impossible. But God has performed a true miracle in my life. I had an emptiness that partying and drinking could not fill. It was an emptiness that was just the right size for Jesus to fill."

Beatriz celebrated last New Year's Eve at the home of her fiancé, an Adventist man, and his family. They drank unfermented grape juice and praised God for His blessings. "I want to grow closer to God," Beatriz said. "I want the love for God in my heart to never end."

Part of this quarter's Thirteenth Sabbath Offering will help the Sharing Jesus house church move from rented premises to a larger building, where it also will offer healthy cooking classes and health seminars. Thank you for your mission offering. 🌍

By Andrew McChesney

Fast Answer to Two Prayers



BRAZIL | June 8

Gilberto Ferreira da Silva, 68

Gilberto never had any interest in joining a church, and he couldn't understand why he suddenly was overcome with a desire to read the Bible.

Unable to resist the urge, the retired Brazilian bank manager began to study the Bible on his own.

Gilberto was amazed by what he read. But parts of the Bible confused him, and he anxiously pondered their meaning. He wished that someone would explain the Bible to him.

On New Year's Eve, he decided to skip the family tradition of watching fireworks from the street in Salvador, a coastal city of 3 million people in Brazil.

"Watch the fireworks without me," he told his wife and three teenage children. "I won't go with you this time."

Gilberto had a plan. He wanted to pray. After his family left the house, he

pleaded with God to teach him the Bible and to reveal His true church.

"God answered that prayer more quickly than any other prayer in my life," Gilberto said later.

Without knowing it, Gilberto had prayed on the seventh-day Sabbath. Dec. 31 fell on a Saturday that year. The next day, Jan. 1, was a Sunday.

On Monday, the first workday of the year, Gilberto received a phone call from the bank where he used to work. The bank director wanted him to come in to sign a new contract on some investments that he owned.

At the bank, Gilberto saw a former co-worker sitting near the bank director's desk and abruptly remembered that the man was a Christian. He went over to the man, Alvaro, after signing the contract.

"Alvaro, do you know where I can study the Bible?" Gilberto asked. He quickly added, "But don't introduce me to a pastor. Don't try to convert me. I just want to study the Bible."

Alvaro was a Seventh-day Adventist, but Gilberto didn't know that.

"You can study the Bible in Cabula," Alvaro said, referring to the city district where he attended an Adventist church.

"That's so far away," Gilberto said. "The traffic is terrible."

Alvaro thought for a moment. "I know just the place," he said. "People just study

Story Tips

- Pronounce Gilberto as: zhu-BER-tu
- Watch a video of Gilberto at the link: bit.ly/Gilberto-Silva
- Find photos for this story at the link: bit.ly/fb-mq

Fast Fact

- Brazil is the only country in South America that speaks Portuguese.

the Bible there. It's not a church."

The next day, on Tuesday, Alvaro took Gilberto to the Sharing Jesus house church, where people meet in small groups to sing and study the Bible. Gilberto, however, felt uncomfortable going somewhere he knew no one, so he asked a family friend, Regina, to come along. His wife refused to go.

Gilberto was fascinated by the Bible study and asked Regina to join him at the next meeting.

"Fine, I'll go with you," she replied. "But I won't join the church."

Regina accompanied Gilberto to every meeting, and she often wore a swimsuit under her clothing so she could swim at the beach afterward.

Gilberto was baptized at the end of the year, on Dec. 31, 2006. Regina was baptized the next year.

"Guess who was baptized with me," Gilberto said with a twinkle in his eye. "My mother."

Shortly before his baptism, he announced the news to his mother, who lived in the Brazilian countryside with his sister, Odete, an Adventist.

"Mom, I'm going to be baptized into my sister's church," he said.

Ten minutes after the telephone conversation ended, Gilberto's mother called back.

"Why can't we be baptized together?" she said.

"Are you prepared for baptism?" Gilberto asked.

"Every day, my daughter gives me Bible lessons," she said. "I can't lose this opportunity to go into the water with you."

She was baptized at the age of 84. Gilberto was 56.

Today, Gilberto is 68 and a co-leader of the Sharing Jesus house church. Part of this quarter's Thirteenth Sabbath Offering will help the house church move from rented premises into a larger building, where it will also offer healthy cooking classes and health seminars.

Gilberto said he marvels at how God answered his New Year's prayer to understand the Bible and know God's true church by leading him to the Adventist house church in just three days.

"How did I come to this church?" he said in an interview at the house church. "It was the love of God. But what prompted me to stay was the welcoming and loving environment that I found."

He added: "I think this church has broken the prejudices of many people. I came from the world, and we have baptized people just like me — physicians, dentists, and lawyers — who normally wouldn't go to church. We welcome people who don't want to go to church and, once they are baptized, they almost never leave the church." 🌍

By Andrew McChesney



Marxist to Adventist

Maria Palmeira, 70

Marita was baptized at the age of 12 in Brazil.

But she left the church as a young adult, and 38 years passed before she could cast aside her faith in Marxism to become a powerhouse for God in her community.

“The ideals of Marxism replaced the ideals of Christ in my life,” said Maria, known to friends as Marita.

Raised by a Seventh-day Adventist mother, Maria taught a Sabbath School class and served as her church’s youth director while in her teens. But she stopped going to church at the age of 22 after a prominent church member said something that offended her. Maria immersed herself into sociology studies and embraced German philosopher and sociologist Karl Marx’s teachings on human rights.

Twenty-five years passed. Maria married, had a son, and was widowed. She moved to Montreal, Canada, to pursue post-doctoral studies at Université du Québec à Montréal.

While there, she received a surprise visit from an old friend, Brazilian pastor Luis

Santana, and his wife, Leoni. Pastor Luis had attended a wedding in the United States and stopped in Montreal for eight days to see Maria before flying home. He and Maria had attended the same church as young adults.

Pastor Luis and his wife visited Maria every day. They spoke about the Bible and Jesus’ love for her. They invited her to return to Christ. Maria listened politely but was unmoved.

Two years later, she returned to Brazil to teach as a university professor. Pastor Luis’ wife called her every week for three years to invite her to attend a Bible study group. Maria always found an excuse not to go.

One day, Maria noticed while preparing for a class that Marx wrote his first manuscript in 1844. She remembered that her mother had said the Adventist movement began in 1844, and she wondered whether the devil might have introduced Marxism to counteract the Adventist message. She compared Marxism with Adventism. She saw that Marx taught that people could change the world through their own power, while Adventists believed that people needed Christ to change.

A short time later, Maria announced to her graduate sociology class, “I now believe that Jesus was a great revolutionary leader, but He wasn’t the Son of God.”

Maria couldn't sleep that night. The next day, a female student, Dinalva, approached her in tears. "You told the class that you don't believe that Christ is the Son of God," Dinalva said. "I couldn't sleep all night. I felt that God wanted me to tell you that you weren't speaking from your heart. You didn't want to admit that you believe in Jesus because you are a Marxist."

Maria didn't know what to say.

Two weeks later, Maria was eating lunch at a café when she heard a choir rehearsing "Maravilhosa Graca" (Wonderful Grace of Jesus) in a Sunday church next door. It was a hymn that she had sung in the Adventist choir as a teen.

Maria slipped into the church's back pew to listen. Moments later, Dinalva entered the church and walked straight to Maria. She hugged the professor and, crying, said, "I knew that I would find you here! I was at home feeding my child, and I had the strong impression that I needed to come here."

Maria was shocked. Dinalva didn't live nearby, and Maria had chosen a café far from the university campus.

After the song finished, the two parted ways. The experience convinced Maria that God wanted her to study the Bible, and she accepted the invitation of Pastor Luis' wife to join the weekly Bible study.

Maria studied with Pastor Luis and his wife for 10 years, but she couldn't accept the Bible as the Word of God. Finally, the wife said, "You need to ask God for faith. You have lost your faith. I will pray for you."

As the wife prayed, a desire grew in Maria's heart to read the Bible at home. She read the Bible for two months and was rebaptized. But she had a problem.

Story Tips

- Know that Maria prefers to go by her nickname, Marita
- Watch a video of Marita singing "Maravilhosa Graca" (Wonderful Grace of Jesus) at the Sharing Jesus house church. The link: bit.ly/Marita-Palmeira
- Find photos for this story at the link: bit.ly/fb-mq

She didn't want to go to church.

"Why don't we have meetings in a house?" she asked Pastor Luis.

The two discussed the idea of establishing a meeting place for people who like the Bible but don't want to go to church. The pastor asked Maria to draft a plan for such a house church. Church leaders then revised the proposal, and the Sharing Jesus house church was born.

Sharing Jesus began with 13 people in 2004. It has now baptized more than 200 people.

"People learn how to love the Adventist Church here. They are converted and baptized, and then we send them to Adventist churches around Salvador," said Maria, now 70 and a co-leader of the house church.

The house church will receive part of this quarter's Thirteenth Sabbath Offering to move out of its rented premises and into a larger building, where it will also offer healthy cooking classes and health seminars.

"We have a lot of music," Maria said. "Many small groups study the Bible and pray. And we are really happy, waiting for Jesus' coming." 🌍

By Andrew McChesney

Unforgettable Proposal

BRAZIL | June 22

Grecielly Nascimento, 20



My mother and stepfather argued constantly in our home in Aracaju, Brazil.

The arguments seemed to grow worse over time, and my childhood was filled with yelling and chaos. I grew up without God and never went to church.

One day when I was 18, a kindly aunt came to visit, and she was shocked by what she saw.

“Your family is really beautiful, but you lack God,” she said. “Let’s go to church. We will enter the first church that we find.”

We left the house by foot: my mother, stepfather, younger sister, a half-sister, a half-brother, and me. The first church that we passed belonged to the Seventh-day Adventist Church, and we went inside. Several young people were conducting an evangelistic series and, afterward, they came to our home to give Bible studies.

I was in school at the time and missed the Bible studies. But my mother and siblings participated, and we all began attending church.

Peace filled our home — for a short time. But then my parents resumed their arguing, and the fighting grew worse than before.

One day my mother couldn’t take it anymore, and she left. We stopped attending church. I didn’t want to leave my young half-siblings, so I stayed with my stepfather.

Several months passed, and the telephone rang one evening. A 26-year-old businessman named Rafael said he was looking for a secretary and asked if I wanted the job. He had visited my school that day and asked the principal to recommend a student, and my 12-year-old half-brother had overheard the conversation and recommended me.

I accepted the job.

Soon I noticed that my new boss didn't act like other bosses. He prayed before work. He didn't eat certain foods. One day, I was riding in his car and he turned on music that I had heard long ago in the Adventist church. I began to sing along with the song. Rafael heard me and asked, "Do you know the Adventist Church?"

I nodded my head.

Rafael said he was an Adventist and invited me to go to church with him. I refused, but he kept insisting, so I finally went one Sabbath. Then I went a second Sabbath and a third Sabbath. After that, I couldn't stop going. I loved worshipping God, and I began taking Bible studies. When I learned about tithe, I immediately started returning 10 percent of my income to God.

I was baptized in February 2017. My 12-year-old half-brother, Jenivaldo, was baptized a few months later. My sisters saw that I was praying and my behavior had changed. My clothes were not the same as before, and I spoke differently. Both sisters — Yasmim, 18, and my 15-year-old half-sister, Evelim — were baptized together.

Five months after my baptism, Rafael proposed to me, and I accepted. We are now constructing a new home, and we will get married after it is built.

I am praying for my parents to find God.

My siblings and I are strong in God. Our lives have changed completely. The way we speak, our friendships, our clothes — everything. I serve in the children's and music departments in my church, while my sisters work in the church reception. My brother is too young to hold a position in the church, but he is a Pathfinder. 🌍

Story Tips

- Pronounce Grecielly as: gray-SYEL-lee
- Read about an 8-year-old girl in Grecielly's Sabbath School class at the link: bit.ly/Grecielly-class
- Watch a video of Marita at the link: bit.ly/Grecielly-Nascimento
- Find photos for this story at the link: bit.ly/fb-mq

Mission Post

- Leo B. Halliwell was a pioneer in boat medical-missionary work, beginning his well-known welfare ministry in 1931 with a launch on the Amazon River, designed and built by himself — the first of a series of such craft named Luzeiro (Light Bearer). Other boats were subsequently built and used on branches of the Amazon. These launches still give assistance to thousands of people. Besides distributing clothing and food, medical help is given for many issues, the most common being malaria, intestinal parasites, malnutrition, skin diseases, general and tropical diseases, and tooth extraction.

In July 1900, the first issue of *O Arauto da Verdade* (The Herald of Truth), the first Adventist periodical in Portuguese, was published.

Part of this quarter's Thirteenth Sabbath Offering will help our church in Aracaju acquire a new building so we will have space for all the people who worship on Sabbaths.

Thank you for your mission offering.

By Grecielly Nascimento, as told to Andrew McChesney

Tired Missionaries

13th SABBATH | May 29

Reno Aguiar Guerra, 32
Natalia Galvao Marinho
Guerra, 32



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

Watch a video of Reno and Natalia at the link: bit.ly/Reno-Guerra

Find photos for this story at the link: bit.ly/fb-mq

The hot Amazon sun made their work exhausting.

Pastor Reno and his wife, Natalia, docked their boat at the remote Brazilian village of Democracia and knocked on the doors of every home to distribute invitation cards to evangelistic meetings.

Then the missionaries walked 45 minutes along a muddy road to another village, where they also visited every home. Three Bible workers helped them by visiting homes in two other villages.

The missionaries did this every day during the month-long evangelistic series at an open-air community center in Democracia.

People flocked to the meetings, many riding in the back of three rented battered pickup trucks secured by the

missionaries. Other people walked. But few Democracia villagers joined the daily gathering of 150 people.

As the meetings entered their second week, Reno and Natalia grew weary. The long morning walks and the villagers' apparent indifference discouraged them.

Some people grumbled that the couple resembled door-to-door salespeople with their daily visits.

Others looked suspiciously at a rising Adventist church building that Reno had hired workers to construct. The villagers belonged to a single Sunday denomination, and they spoke with worry about how families had been split in a neighboring village when a rival Sunday denomination had entered that community. They didn't want division in Democracia.

Thirteenth Sabbath Program

➤	Congregational Song	“Tis Love That Makes Us Happy” <i>The Seventh-day Adventist Hymnal</i> , No.579
➤	Welcome	Superintendent or Sabbath School teacher
➤	Prayer	
➤	Program	“Tired Missionaries”
➤	Offering	
➤	Closing Song	“I’ll Go Where You Want Me to Go” <i>The Seventh-day Adventist Hymnal</i> , No. 573
➤	Closing Prayer	

After one particularly tiring day, Reno and Natalia collapsed on their boat.

“Why are we here?” Reno said. “The field doesn’t appear to be ripe. It seems like no one will accept the Bible.”

“I don’t want to do this work anymore,” Natalia said. “I love this work, but they aren’t accepting the truth.”

In despair, Natalia opened the Bible app on her cell phone and pressed a button to randomly choose a verse. “Please God,” she prayed. “Show us why we’re here.”

Galatians 6:9 stared back at her, reading, “And let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart.”

“That’s our answer!” Natalia exclaimed.

The next day, a middle-aged woman cried out with joy when Reno and Natalia stopped by her home with an invitation card to the evangelistic meetings.

“That’s my church!” she said, pointing to the Adventist Church’s Hope Channel

logo on the card. “This has been my church for four years, and I want to be baptized.”

The missionaries learned that the woman had watched Novo Tempo television, the Brazilian affiliate of Hope Channel, for the past four years and prayed for a preacher like those on the channel to come to her village.

The woman was among 50 people baptized when the meetings ended in December 2017.

Also baptized were two sisters, Franciene, 19, and Delciene, 16, who began attending after the missionaries read the Bible promise. The sisters’ parents forbade them from going to the meetings, but they went anyway.

“Our father doesn’t accept our faith, and he didn’t want us to be baptized today, so we came by ourselves,” Franciene said in a video recording that Reno made on the day of the baptism. “Grandmother came to our home last night to talk with

him. He said that if we got baptized, he would beat us. But even if our family doesn't accept our faith, we still want to be with Jesus."

As he listened to the sisters speak about their newfound faith, Reno remembered his own discouragement just weeks earlier.

"I thought about how I said no one would accept the Bible," he said. "But God was working on their hearts."

The villagers, who had worried that a new church might create a rift, ended up changing their minds.

"Wow, this is a different kind of church," said one.

"You care for us and don't want to divide the community," said another.

Democracia was the last site of three evangelistic series organized in 2017 by Reno, pastor of the Amazonia de Esperanca (Amazon of Hope) boat church, a 2016 Thirteenth Sabbath project. Reno baptized 286 people and planted three churches in 2017, the boat church's first full 12 months in operation.

The boat — which has a meeting hall with air conditioning, a projector and sound system, and seats for 150 people — travels to remote villages along the Amazon River. While an especially muddy shoreline made it impossible to use the boat for the Democracia meetings, the boat

was used for the other evangelistic series.

After Democracia, Reno and Natalia, both 32, are convinced that discouragement has no place in the Adventist work.

"It isn't us who are doing the work. It is God who is preparing people before we arrive," Reno said. "We have nothing to be worried about because God is preparing people in the Amazon jungle through television and other means."

"The Lord does everything, and we are only the tools to guide people to Him," said Natalia, who quit her job as a lawyer to become a missionary. "I thank the Lord every day for our work."

The couple expressed gratitude to church members around the world for contributing to the purchase of the boat church through the Thirteenth Sabbath Offering in fourth quarter 2016.

"The boat church is God's way of saving people who have been forgotten by political, economic, and health systems," Reno said. "But these people have not been forgotten by God."

"Villagers are waiting for missionaries and waiting to know Jesus," Natalia said. "Jesus only needs one person who is willing to say, 'Here I am, send me!'" 🌍

By Andrew McChesney

Future Thirteenth Sabbath Projects

The Thirteenth Sabbath Offering next quarter will help the South Pacific Division to:

- "Save 10,000 Toes," a campaign to prevent toe amputations through health services in Fiji, Vanuatu, Solomon Islands, Samoa, American Samoa, Kiribati, and Tonga.
- Construct Hope TV and radio studios in Tongatapu, Tonga.
- Produce "Daniel Children's Series," a 13-part animated series for children aged 8-12 following the adventures of Daniel and his three friends, in Australia.

Leader's Resources

Following are sources of information that may be helpful in preparing for the mission segment of Sabbath School. For more information on the cultures and history of the countries featured in this quarterly, visit your local library or a travel agency, or visit the websites listed below.

Argentina: government website Lonely Planet	argentina.gob.ar bit.ly/LPUruguay
Brazil: government website Brazil Travel Information	bit.ly/BrazilGov bit.ly/BrazTrav
Paraguay: government website World Travel Guide	bit.ly/ParGov bit.ly/WTGParaguay
Peru: government website Visit Peru	peru.gob.pe http://bit.ly/Visit-Peru
Uruguay: government website BBC Country Profile	portal.gub.uy bit.ly/UruguayBBC
Seventh-day Adventist South American Division Argentina Union Conference East Brazil Union Mission North Brazil Union Mission Northeast Brazil Union Mission South Brazil Union Conference West Central Brazil Union Mission Paraguay Union of Churches Mission North Peru Union Mission South Peru Union Mission Uruguay Union of Churches Mission	bit.ly/SADiv ua.adventistas.org ulb.adventistas.org unb.adventistas.org unb.adventistas.org usb.adventistas.org ucob.adventistas.org up.adventistas.org upn.adventistas.org upsur.adventistas.org uu.adventistas.org

An offering goal device will help focus attention on world missions and increase weekly mission giving. Determine a goal for your class's weekly mission offering. Multiply it by 14, allowing a double goal for the Thirteenth Sabbath Offering.

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

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YOUTH & ADULT MISSION

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SOUTH AMERICAN DIVISION

CONFERENCE	CHURCHES	COMPANIES	MEMBERSHIP	POPULATION
Argentina Union Conference	606	438	116,391	44,293,000
Bolivia Union Mission	424	702	116,480	11,146,000
Central Brazil Union Conference	1,181	845	264,059	45,042,612
Chile Union Mission	677	339	102,481	18,374,000
East Brazil Union Mission	1,061	1,534	206,881	16,586,989
Ecuador Union Mission	278	416	58,865	16,777,000
North Brazil Union Mission	1,657	1,393	291,905	16,295,989
North Peru Union Mission	1,340	1,749	209,891	15,925,368
Northeast Brazil Union Mission	989	1,464	213,683	33,361,049
Northwest Brazil Union Mission	952	776	170,188	7,233,424
Paraguay Union of Churches Mission	61	95	12,519	6,811,000
South Brazil Union Conference	1,153	968	185,557	30,305,551
South Peru Union Mission	1,155	1,478	191,293	15,912,632
Southeast Brazil Union Conference	1,306	1,097	207,719	41,820,828
Uruguay Union of Churches Mission	59	50	7,890	3,457,000
West Central Brazil Union Mission	707	736	126,133	17,210,560
Division Totals	13,606	14,080	2,481,935	340,553,000

PROJECTS

- 1 Establish a church and medical center in Pucallpa, Peru
- 2 Open a youth-focused community center with English-language school in Cusco, Peru
- 3 Plant a church and health-focused community center in Aruana, Brazil
- 4 Acquire property for a church and community center in Salvador, Brazil