



YOUTH & ADULT MISSION

2016 • **QUARTER 4** • INTER-EUROPEAN DIVISION



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On the Cover: Although she didn't know it at the time, Monika, from Vienna, Austria, was planting an international church with her handwritten notes. Read her story on pages 8 and 9.

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Your Offerings at Work

Your Thirteenth Sabbath Offering for the Inter-European Division during the third quarter, 2013, provided funds for building a community outreach center and church near Lisbon, Portugal; a church for the Romani (Gypsy) people in western Bulgaria; and funding for evangelistic outreach to students in the Czech Republic and Slovakia. Thank you!



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12501 Old Columbia Pike,
Silver Spring, MD 20904-6601
800.648.5824 • www.AdventistMission.org

Dear Sabbath School Leader,

This quarter we feature the Inter-European Division. More than 336 million people live in the Inter-European Division, but only 178,380 are Seventh-day Adventists, a ratio of about one Adventist for every 1,800 people.

This quarter we have several human interest stories featuring individuals who have overcome various obstacles and whose lives have been positively changed through friendships they have made with Seventh-day Adventists.

It was of particular interest to me to see how Adventist churches in Europe have been reaching out to and ministering to the many refugees flooding in from the Middle East.

As one Adventist pastor told me, “I used to wonder how we would ever reach people in the Middle East, but now they are coming to us!”

It was a joy to meet with some of these refugees, and to see the joy in their faces as they told me their stories of how the Seventh-day Adventist Church has made such an important difference in their lives.

We hope that you and your Sabbath

schools will be blessed by these real and powerful stories.

The Thirteenth Sabbath Offering this quarter will help to build a new church in Vienna, Austria for an international Adventist congregation; a Jewish-Adventist friendship center in Paris, France; an Adventist church in Ragusa, Italy; and a unique outreach program for children and youth in Romania.

Special Features

We are now on Facebook! Please visit our page and like us at www.facebook.com/missionquarterlies/.

The free *Mission Spotlight* DVD from Adventist Mission features a variety of mission stories featuring the Thirteenth Sabbath Offering countries and more. To download, go to www.adventistmission.org/dvd.

More information and activities: In the “Leader’s Resources” page in the back of this quarterly you will find several helpful websites listed that will provide a wealth of supplemental material for your mission presentations.

Thank you once again for your dedication to mission and helping those in your Sabbath School to connect with their spiritual brothers and sisters around the world, and encouraging them to participate in the mission of the church through giving.

Wishing you God’s richest blessings!



Gina Wahlen, Editor

Opportunities

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

- a new building for the International Seventh-day Adventist Church in Vienna, Austria.
- a Jewish-Adventist Friendship Center in Paris, France.
- an Adventist church in Ragusa, Italy.

Refugee of Love

Ahmad



photo: freemages.com

Ahmad* had been searching for peace for decades. He tried alcohol, then narcotics—but nothing filled the longing of his soul.

Deciding to come clean, Ahmad started attending Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) and Narcotics Anonymous (NA) groups in his home country located in the Middle East. Benefiting from the meetings, Ahmad wanted to help others overcome their addictions so he became a certified AA/NA speaker. He also obtained a license from the government allowing him to hold AA and NA meetings in his home.

“I Feel Peace”

Reading was something Ahmad enjoyed, and one day he found a book containing several Bible quotations. He had never read such a book and peace flooded his soul as he read it.

Telling his friends about the book, Ahmad exclaimed, “This is another idea

about life, and I love it! I feel peace when I read it.”

Soon afterward, a friend quietly gave Ahmad a Bible. As Ahmad read the sacred book, he felt even more peace and comfort. When he asked his friend some questions, the friend took him to a home where a small group of Christians were secretly meeting.

“In my country,” says Ahmad, “when the government gets any little news that you’ve changed your religion or are even interested in changing it—they will kill you. People just ‘disappear.’”

“But when I found this Book [the Bible], I found Jesus and light. Everything changed and I wanted to introduce this to others.”

“A God Who Loves Us”

Ahmad continued leading out in AA and NA meetings in his home. Slowly he began introducing Christ to the groups, but not directly by name.

“There is a God who loves us,” Ahmad told them. “A God who is a Father who sent His Son to us.”

But some attendees weren’t pleased.

“Be careful of what you say,” Ahmad’s friends warned him. “They record everything, and they’ll make problems for you.”

Ahmad was more careful. “But I couldn’t just sit,” he confessed. “In AA, I learned that you should pass the message

* All names in this story have been changed.

to others. And I learned from the Bible that if you want to keep the hope you have, you must pass it on.”

Ahmad became involved with a network that secretly downloaded Christian sermons, then copied them, and made little packs that included a small Bible, sermons about the Bible, and a Bible course on a CD. These illegal packs were quietly distributed throughout the country.

“I’ve Found This Church”

About this time Ahmad started hearing from Hamid, a friend who had left their country and was now in Austria.

“I’ve found this church that says the same thing as you about alcohol and drugs,” Hamid said excitedly. “They’re friendly and have accepted me. They let me help and be a part of them.”

Hamid had found a Seventh-day Adventist church.

“When you escape your country in the situation that we’re facing,” Ahmad explains, “you’re worried that no one will accept you. But these people accepted him and were very friendly. And they

helped him to have a better relationship with God.”

For more than a year, Hamid communicated with Ahmad, telling him about the wonderful spiritual experiences he found at the Adventist church.

Fleeing Danger

Ahmad continued to secretly meet with the underground Christian church in his home country. One day, however, one of his Christian friends “disappeared.” Ahmad soon heard that the government had learned of his friend’s conversion, and that he and his wife were in grave danger.

Although his wife was in her ninth month of pregnancy, Ahmad realized that their only safety was to flee. Quickly and quietly, the couple left their home and secretly traveled to another country. From there they found their way to Austria—and their friend, Hamid.

Finding Peace

The first day they were in the country, Hamid took them to the Adventist church. “You can find peace here,” he told the weary couple.

“And I found more than peace—I found peace and love,” says Ahmad. “It was the first time that I experienced someone wanting to help you for nothing in return. They love you because of the love of Jesus. I didn’t find this love in my own family. Because of their religion, my parents couldn’t be kind to me. In their religious views, God isn’t kind. But here, I felt this message in my heart—‘You are a refugee of love.’”

Ahmad continues to spread the good news of what he has learned and has already brought many more refugees to the church. 🌍

Fast Facts

- Austria’s capital city is Vienna.
- Austria is mostly a mountainous country, with an average elevation of 3,000 feet (914 meters).
- The Danube river is the longest river in Austria.
- German is the official language of Austria and is spoken by over 88% of the population. Other local languages include Hungarian, Croatian, Serbian, Bosnian, Turkish and Polish.

“I Feel Safe Now”

AUSTRIA | October 8

Fatima



photo: freemages.com

Fatima’s* life was filled with terror. Married to an abusive man who used his religion to terrorize her, Fatima (fa-TEEM-ah) frequently suffered beatings and humiliation at the hands of her husband. Trapped inside her home, Fatima was rarely allowed outside—a practice not uncommon in this middle eastern country.

Finally, due to financial need, Fatima’s husband allowed her to work in a beauty salon—where she would only be around other women. Although she now had some interaction with others, Fatima became increasingly depressed and tried to commit suicide.

“But I couldn’t really do it,” she recalled. “Something inside of me was saying ‘*This isn’t right. Don’t do that.*’” Feeling hopeless, Fatima mechanically went through the day-to-day motions of life.

* All names in this story have been changed..

“Why so sad?”

One day at the salon, a middle-aged client kindly asked Fatima, “What is wrong, my daughter? Why are you so sad?”

Sensing the woman’s genuine concern, Fatima began to share her heart. After hearing Fatima’s story, the woman spoke about hope, kindness, and love. Fatima’s heart was strangely moved and she looked forward to this client’s regular visits.

One day the woman invited Fatima to her home for a meal, and Fatima’s husband allowed her to go. As they ate together, the woman began telling Fatima about Jesus and how He could bring peace and hope.

Secret Meeting

The two women continued meeting together and gradually Fatima began to feel encouraged. Then one day the woman invited Fatima to come with her to a secret gathering where she would learn more about Jesus.

Fatima was interested, and so the two went to a home where eight others had gathered. The people were reading from Bibles and a man was leading out in a discussion. It was the first time Fatima had seen a Bible, and she was delighted when one was placed in her hands!

Because of her controlling husband, Fatima wasn’t able to attend the secret group regularly. Nevertheless, she was able to keep the precious Bible.

But one day terror struck again.

Mission Post

- The Austrian Union of Churches has 50 churches and 4,135 church members.
- In 1895 L. R. Conradi conducted the first Adventist baptismal service in Austria-Hungary at Klausenburg.
- The year 1902 marks the beginning of SDA missionary work in Vienna by H. Kokolsky, a well-known sculptor at the turn of the century who had been baptized by G. Perk in Germany.
- In 1909 the first native Austrian Seventh-day Adventist minister, Franz Gruber, was ordained in Vienna.

Arriving home from the salon, Fatima learned that her husband had discovered her Bible. Beating her mercilessly, the man declared that he was going to kill her.

Miraculously, Fatima survived the beating but was again housebound. Gradually, however, Fatima was allowed to again work. But now her husband carefully monitored her every move.

“I’ll Kill You!”

Fatima longed for the fellowship of the small group of Bible-believers, and decided to risk attending the secret meeting. Unfortunately, her husband saw her and started screaming, “I’ll kill you! I’ll kill all of them! They are infidels!”

Fatima escaped to her parents’ home where she stayed until her husband found her. Banging on the door, the man announced to Fatima’s parents that their daughter had become a Christian and deserved to die.

“If I don’t kill her, then you must!” the crazed man screamed.

Turning toward Fatima, the enraged

parents were about to beat her when she quickly fled into another room and pled for her life.

Escaping With Her Life

That night Fatima quietly snuck out of her parents’ home, escaping with nothing but her life. Quickly contacting her Christian friends, Fatima was given the address of a home outside of the city where she could hide.

During her two-week stay there, the pastor of the small group regularly visited Fatima, bringing her food and clothing. He told her, “If you really want to be a Christian, I can help you. But if you don’t want to continue in this new way, you can go back to your family.”

“I really want to be a Christian,” Fatima bravely affirmed.

Because it was too dangerous for Fatima to stay in her home country, the Christian group helped her escape to a neighboring country, and from there paid her way to Austria.

Arriving in Austria, Fatima got in touch with Ahmad** and his wife, who had fled from the same city as Fatima.

“We have found the church that is exactly the place you are looking for!” Ahmad’s wife told Fatima.

That Sabbath, Fatima came with the couple to the Seventh-day Adventist church and found it just as they described. “I found peace, hope, and kindness here,” she said. “The people really help me understand that I’m not alone.

“Since I’ve been coming to this church, I’ve had many miracles in my life. People prayed for me. A family has taken me in and are caring for me like their own daughter. I feel safe now.” 🌍

** See last week’s story featuring Ahmad.



Handwritten Notes

Monika

It all began with handwritten notes. Writing as fast as she could, Monika provided a quick but quiet English translation as her father, the church's head elder, preached in German. The five Filipina nurses surrounding the young woman were grateful for Monika's efforts.

Due to a national shortage of hospital and clinic staff in the 1970s and 1980s, the Philippine and Austrian governments agreed to send health workers to the country. Through this program, many Filipino nurses came to work in Austria.

Marietta was part of a group of nurses assigned to work in Vienna. Before she left the Philippines, her father assured her that "there must be Adventists in Vienna." So on Sabbath morning, she and another Adventist nurse from the same group, got dressed for church, and started walking around the city looking for a Seventh-day Adventist church.

Searching for a Church

"We found a church, but nobody was inside," recalled Marietta. "Each Sabbath

we searched. We were so sad that we didn't see anyone who looked like an Adventist."

They searched for a year with no success. Disappointed, Marietta wrote to her father, "We don't see any Adventist church here!"

As these were the days before the internet, Marietta's father wrote to the mission office in the Philippines, who then sent her the address of the Austrian Union office in Vienna. Delighted, Marietta and her friend attended an Adventist church the next Sabbath, where they were warmly welcomed.

Rapid Growth

After a few months, the nurses were introduced to Monika and her parents and so began attending their church, where Monika provided written translation for them. As time went by, more Filipinos arrived in Vienna, along with more English-speaking people from other Asian and African countries. Most of these foreigners had come to Austria to work or study and were looking for a church home.

The English-speaking Sabbath school class at the Vienna church grew rapidly and soon Monika's much-appreciated hand-written sermon translations were no longer adequate for the many people needing language assistance.

By 1987, it was decided that to facilitate

continued growth, the international group needed to have their own church. So the German-speaking members moved to a new location and the international group were given the original building.

An International Church

The International Seventh-day Adventist Church in Vienna, Austria, was officially established in the fourth quarter, 1987, with 19 members. Just a few months later, official membership had jumped to 40, with many more guests attending each week. The church became known as a place of warmth, friendship, spiritual growth and fellowship for the many people coming and going in Vienna.

Today, with its 153 members and nearly as many weekly visitors, the church has outgrown its original facilities. Each Sabbath the worship hall is packed tight with people from around the world, singing and praising the Lord together. Following Sabbath School and worship services, a fellowship dinner is provided each week and is a big draw—particularly for the many students attending various schools and universities in Vienna.

“Most of the foreigners who come here felt homeless when they first arrived [in Vienna],” says the church’s pastor, Felix Metonou. “Even if they don’t have a Christian background, they are happy to come to a place where at least they can understand the language, someone is loving, and they can get food. They feel the warmth of the people here; they feel comfortable.”

Retention and Growth

Some Adventists who may have been regularly worshipping in their home countries can become discouraged when

Fast Facts

- Wiener Schnitzel is a typical Austrian main dish and the dessert “Strudel” or “Apfelstrudel” (filled with apple) was created in Austria
- Austro-Hungarian Baroness Bertha von Suttner was the first woman to win the Nobel Peace Prize in 1905.
- Vienna’s Central Cemetery has over 2.5 million tombs, including those of Beethoven, Brahms, Gluck, Schubert, Schoenberg and Strauss.
- Ferdinand Porsche, founder of the Porsche automobile company, was born in Mattersdorf, Austria, in 1875.

they arrive in a new country and they miss their families and spiritual brothers and sisters back home. “I would dare to say,” adds Pastor Felix, “that we are able to keep some people [Adventists] in the Church because of this church.”

Foreigners no longer need to walk the streets of Vienna in order to find a Seventh-day Adventist church where they can worship. “Since I put up the webpage for the church more than seven years ago,” says Pastor Felix, “not a week has gone by that I am not receiving contacts over the internet.”

Recently, Monika came back to visit her “mother church” and was delighted with what she found. Reflecting on her first visit in more than 30 years, she said, “What was the most overwhelming thing was when we sang ‘How Great Thou Art.’ We used to be only a small group of people in a big room, but now the room is overcrowded! I can only say thanks to the Lord—I never dreamed it would grow like this!” 🌍

A Place to Call Home

AUSTRIA | October 22

Yuxin



When Yuxin (YOU-shin) left home to study piano at the world-famous Prayner Conservatory in Vienna, Austria, her mother gave her some important advice—“Find the spirit of home.”

Yuxin and her mother attended an evangelical church in China for ten years, then one day as Yuxin’s mother was reading the Bible, she noticed that the seventh day of the week was God’s holy day. As she shared what she had learned with her daughter, Yuxin was surprised.

“I had never even noticed that before,” she recalled. Deciding to pray about it, Yuxin pled, “Please God, tell me if this is really true or not.”

Not long afterward, Yuxin found a Seventh-day Adventist church and decided to visit. Later, as she met with the pastor, she had many questions about the Sabbath and what Adventists believe.

Patiently, he answered Yuxin’s questions from the Bible.

But Yuxin wasn’t convinced. “Maybe this is right,” she thought, but she wasn’t willing to make a commitment. At the time, Yuxin was also eating pork, and wasn’t ready to give that up. Nevertheless, after arriving in Vienna, Yuxin found the International Seventh-day Adventist Church on the internet and contacted Pastor Felix.

“When I picked Yuxin up from the metro station and brought her to the church,” Pastor Felix recalls, “it was clear that she was excited to be here.”

Finally Rest

“It was really good,” Yuxin recalled. “I didn’t understand about Adventists, so I came to listen. I attended the worships on Friday evenings, and church on Saturdays.”

After just a few weeks, Yuxin felt at home at the International Seventh-day Adventist church. “It’s so warm. You can finally take a rest and feel so good,” she said. “And then on Saturday you listen to the words of God and have a wonderful feeling!”

As Yuxin kept coming she continued learning more about the Bible, and about Adventists. “The preaching really touched me. It was a wonderful experience for me. God gave me the power to give up a lot of things—like eating pork, and going shopping on Saturdays. Now I understand and I gave them up.”

Mission Post

- In Austria 60% of the people are Catholic, 6% Eastern Orthodox, 6% Muslim, 4% Protestant, and 24% are other or none.
- M. B. Czechowski, the self-supporting missionary, was the first Adventist to evangelize in Austria, before the first official missionary, J. N. Andrews, was sent to Europe in 1874. Czechowski died and was buried in Vienna, Austria in 1876.
- Bogenhofen Seminary and Bogenhofen Senior High School are located at St. Peter am Hart, Austria.

Last May, Yuxin was baptized into the Seventh-day Adventist Church and is eager to take back to her home country what she has learned in Vienna. While she's been in Austria, Yuxin's family has moved from the north to the south part of China. There are no Adventist churches in the area. When she returns home, Yuxin plans to share with her family and neighbors the Bible truths she has learned from the Adventists, and hopefully start an Adventist home-worship group. "They need to know why Adventism exists, and what I learned here. God really told me the truth, and now I can also tell them."

International Students

Yuxin is one of several international students who have found their way to the International Adventist Church in Vienna. Abigail, from Mexico, is studying classical singing at the Music and Arts University of the City of Vienna.

"When I first started coming here, I felt really welcome and could identify with others," said Abigail. "We're all

foreigners, and we have similar problems. We come here to heal. People are so warm, welcoming, and caring. It's like a family—a family in Christ."

Lorenzo, also from Mexico, is a Ph.D. student in the physics program at the University of Vienna. He enjoys coming to the international church every week and says that it's not just the weekly potluck that draws him to church, but "it's also the spiritual food that we receive here. The sermons, the Sabbath School lessons—they always give me strength to continue. I came here alone, but now I'm not alone anymore."

Yew is studying in a post-doctoral fellowship in pharmacy at the University of Vienna. He's from Ghana. "Because I'm a researcher, I like to compare, so I looked for a church that would suit me, and I felt at home here," he said. "I met some other Ghanaians here, and sometimes if you miss food from home you can find some here. It's like a family and everybody smiles."

Growing Family

That warm and friendly international church family has grown over the years and it is now in need of a new church building. Part of the Thirteenth Sabbath Offering this quarter will help this church family to have a larger building, closer to the city center.

"This place, it's rather small, but it has touched so many lives," said Abigail. "It has touched so many people in so many ways, and it's spreading. That's why we need this help [for a new building]. We need to be in a closer place to the city center, a larger place, so that more people can come. We need this help."

Thank you for giving generously to the Thirteenth Sabbath Offering. 🌍



Sleeping With Beavers

Ferdinand

Ferdinand hadn't always slept with the beavers. For most of his life he lived a normal life in the famous city of Vienna, Austria. But then business went bad, his income dropped dramatically, and Ferdinand decided to drop out of society and live on the streets.

Grabbing a sleeping bag, Ferdinand left home and found a spot along the Donau Canal, the southern branch of the Danube River flowing through the heart of Vienna and regulated as a water channel since 1598. It was there, on a grassy slope beside the canal, that Ferdinand became acquainted with the beavers.

Usually the interactions were friendly, but one night Ferdinand heard a chewing noise close to his head. "I saw that the beaver was under 'my' tree," recalls Ferdinand. As the beaver continued gnawing on the tree Ferdinand pleaded with him, "This is the last thing I have. Please take another tree." The beaver obeyed.

Some weeks later, when government landscapers tried to capture the beaver, Ferdinand repaid the animal's kindness. "I

made sure that the beaver was in another place so they couldn't catch him—and they never did!" he said with a grin.

Ferdinand's day started with a quick wash in cold water from a nearby well. He then visited a local shelter to receive a free cup of coffee, before heading off to the city library where he read all day. In the evening he went to another shelter to receive a free dinner. Afterwards, he slipped back to his spot along the Donau canal to sleep. The next day the routine repeated.

The homeless community is very social, explained Ferdinand. Word spreads quickly about where to find necessities such as free food and clothing. That was how Ferdinand first came into contact with Seventh-day Adventists. Word on the street was that the best clothes were at the ADRA (Adventist Development and Relief Agency) Center in Vienna.

Ferdinand visited the center and found not only good clothes but a hot lunch as well. He also met Evald, an Adventist pastor.

"If you need help," Evald told Ferdinand, "I'm here. But you decide." Ferdinand appreciated the pastor's no-pressure approach. He continued visiting the ADRA center and before long the two had developed a close relationship.

During the next six years, Ferdinand

and Evald enjoyed many lively discussions together about life, religion, and God. Gradually, Ferdinand's thinking began to change and so did his life. He became more open to re-integrating into society and started to realize his need for God.

One day in 2014, Pastor Evald asked, "Ferdinand, what can we do here for the homeless?" Happy that the pastor had asked for his input, Ferdinand seriously considered what else might be done to help the homeless. "It took me three months to settle on a project," he recalled. "Then in September we started it."

The pastor spoke with Marcel Wagner, the ADRA-Austria director, telling him about Ferdinand, the changes taking place in his life, and his potential for leadership. Marcel met with Ferdinand and was impressed. "After our first talk, I realized that he had a vision for this center of influence. We encouraged him to start his project and gave him the space to work here. He's now part of the staff—a paid ADRA project manager.

Ferdinand's project involved two aspects. He explains, "We offer the homeless breakfast on Sundays, and this is a bridge for us to also invite them to a Bible study group that we started on Saturday afternoons."

Under Ferdinand's leadership, the center of influence has grown tremendously. In just a matter of months the center continued to expand its services to the homeless, refugees, and other people in need. In addition to the Sunday breakfast and Sabbath afternoon Bible studies, hot lunches are provided on Tuesdays and Thursdays. Clothing is distributed to men on Tuesdays and to women and children on Wednesdays.

Fast Facts

- Gregor Mendel was an Austrian monk who became famous for his garden experiments with pea plants. His experiments became the basis for the science of genetics, and he is known as the "father of modern genetics."
- Alpine, or downhill, skiing has been the most popular sport in Austria for over 100 years.
- As of 2016, Austria has 21 Nobel Prize laureates, including seven in Physiology or Medicine, six in Chemistry, three in Physics, three in Peace, one in economics, and one in literature.

"He's giving the people here the respect they need to go on in life," explains Marcel. "He was himself on the street and he knows exactly their needs. Because of the way he treats them, people love coming here, and we have no trouble. There are no arguments or fights—it is a totally different atmosphere than some of the other places."

Ferdinand regularly attends one of the Adventist churches in Vienna. He also coordinates the 65 volunteers who come to help at the center.

"Another part of our job is to bring people from our church and work together as volunteers," says Ferdinand. "The church members bring their non-Adventist friends and they work together."

"Before Ferdinand came, the teams from the churches would come and have their projects, but now they mingle and work together with others," Marcel adds. "He's appealing to the pastors to work together beyond the church family." 🌍



Part of a Plan

Kenan

Two centuries before Christ, Archimedes of Syracuse was born on the Mediterranean island of Sicily. This ancient Greek mathematician, physicist, engineer, inventor, and astronomer is considered to be one of the greatest mathematicians of all time.

Centuries later, another young Sicilian has a love for science and mathematics and hopes to become an astronomer.

“Since I was a little boy,” says Kenan, a physics student at the University of Catania, “I tried to learn all about science. I read many books, including the Bible. I especially liked the verse, ‘Look up into the sky and count the stars if you can’ (Gen. 15:5, NLT).”

“I like the stars the most,” he admits, “because they reveal the incredible power of a God who created incredible things. If you compare our smallness to this big universe, it’s fantastic.”

The University of Catania, where Kenan is studying, was founded in 1434

and is the oldest university in Sicily. Several famous scientists have been associated with the university.

Today, while many consider science and the Bible to be incompatible, Kenan hopes that one day he will “discover something new in astronomy, something related to creation, and to the Bible.” He continues, “We have chemistry, math, biology—all are in the Bible. The wisdom of God can be seen in the Bible in *all* things.”

Kenan isn’t shy about sharing his faith. Even in high school, Kenan let his light shine.

Being a keen mathematics student, Kenan was selected by his local school to participate in the Italian Mathematical Olympiad—a national, multi-level competition for high school students. The tests include challenging problems in algebra, combinatorics, geometry, and number theory.

Kenan gained the top score in his local area and went on to compete at the

Fast Facts

- Sicily is the largest of the Italian islands, separated from the continent by the Strait of Messina and surrounded by the Ionian, the Tyrrhenian and the Mediterranean Seas.
- The oldest European university in continuous operation is the University of Bologna, founded in 1088. Thirteen other Italian universities are over 500 years old.
- The mechanical clock, the barometer, the thermometer, and optical glasses are all Italian inventions.

regional level, where he earned the top score in all of Sicily—an autonomous region of Italy. Kenan then learned that the national competition was scheduled to take place on a Saturday.

Being a faithful Seventh-day Adventist, Kenan wouldn't compete on the Sabbath. After praying, he decided to approach the chairman of the Mathematical Olympiad. Explaining his situation, Kenan asked if it might be possible to change the exam date. He was told that the staff would consider his situation. It was the first time in the history of the Olympiad that anyone had made such a request.

Not long afterward, Kenan was surprised to be invited back by the International Olympiad leaders, most of whom are university professors from around the world. The group questioned him about his religion. Kenan told them that he was a Seventh-day Adventist.

“But why do you keep the Sabbath?” the group wanted to know. Kenan explained that the Sabbath was rooted in Creation when God “rested on the seventh day . . .

and sanctified it” (Gen. 2:2,3, NKJV).

This, of course, led them to ask, “Why do you believe in Creation?” They had difficulty understanding how a smart teenager could actually believe what they considered to be mythology.

Kenan replied that they “didn't have to see everything through the same lens. Maybe religion doesn't exclude science. There are many things we don't know. In nature we have some proof that there is intelligent design. The Creator put all of the parts together. We didn't come into this world from chaos. We're part of a plan—something that God created.”

The Olympiad leaders were shocked. They had never heard anything like this from a competitor. They decided to change the national competition to a Friday. Kenan was delighted. He achieved the sixth-highest score in the nation and earned a university scholarship.

Now at the University of Catania, Kenan's witness continues. Recently he's been talking with his professors about the gravitational waves that were detected earlier this year (2016). When two black holes collide and then merge with each other, they release energy in the form of gravitational waves. The union produces a single, massive spinning black hole 21 times the mass of the sun.

“This isn't something that comes from chaos,” Kenan explains, “but from a wonderful mind. It's not chaos . . . it confirms Creation.

“Some teachers accept what I'm saying and are really interested, and I can share with them,” says Kenan. “Others just joke with me, but that's a beginning. At least we're building a relationship.” 🌐

Fully Engaged

Giorgio



Giorgio (George-e-o) Bella had a dream—to fully engage the church with the community. He is very active in the Adventist church in Ragusa on the island of Sicily. He leads out in the Pathfinder Club and serves as area coordinator. He owns a local business and offers a large classroom in his building to be used to teach skills classes to those who need it most.

Giorgio also serves as one of the volunteer leaders for ADRA (Adventist Development and Relief Agency) in Ragusa. He and co-leader Carmela Cascone wanted to expand Adventist work within the community.

When the ADRA service first began in Ragusa several years ago, the main function was to provide food and clothing to those in need. The volunteers then expanded their services to include social activities including Italian language courses for foreigners, a program of support and assistance to foreign prisoners, and some mental health services including a listening center.

Working with Others

After a while, however, the volunteers realized that this wasn't a work they could do alone. "We wanted to expand what we were doing for society," said Giorgio. "But we needed to work with the city council and others from outside the church."

So Giorgio and Carmela decided to meet with officials from the Ragusa city council and ask the councillors what services were most needed in the area.

At first they sensed some hesitancy, since the councillors weren't familiar with the Seventh-day Adventist Church, but as time went on and the councillors observed the work the ADRA volunteers were doing, their confidence grew.

Confidence grew so strong that in 2014 the project "Food Bank Foundation," a food assistance program for needy families established by the City of Ragusa, was entrusted solely to ADRA Ragusa. The service includes the procurement, storage and distribution of food for families who have been referred by the local Social Services department.

The distribution center is located in part of the ground-floor area of an apartment building where the Ragusa Seventh-day Adventist Church is currently meeting.

"We have created a connection with the local people, with other [social

Mission Post

- Italy was the first country in Europe in which Adventist doctrines were preached. M. B. Czechowski, a former Catholic priest from Poland who had been baptized in the United States in 1857, went to Italy as an unofficial missionary in 1864.
- Sicily, an autonomous region of Italy, was entered in 1916 with the return of sisters M. and D. Infranco from the United States.
- In September 1920, R. Calderone came to Sicily and baptized six people.
- In May 1921, the first church in Sicily was organized at Montevago.

welfare] associations, but we are the center,” says Giorgio. “Only ADRA has the exclusive right to distribute this food.” He notes the significance of this honor because until now in Sicily the Roman Catholic Church has been granted this exclusivity by the government.

“We invited all of the other associations, including the Catholic associations, to come to our church for a meeting. We have developed feelings of trust between us, and now they all see us as normal people,” Giorgio said with a smile. “We’re also trying to work with volunteers from outside of the Adventist church, too. We try to involve them one by one as part of the team. We have to be humble and professional.”

Life Has Changed

Joseph is just one of many people whose life has been touched by the Adventists in Ragusa. Being unemployed for some time, Joseph decided to approach the

government for help.

“I was frustrated,” says Joseph. “When you’re in this situation, you feel bad even to ask [for help].”

The government social worker sent him to the center at the Adventist church, and there he received more help than he expected.

“The people here are really fantastic,” he said. They helped me a lot. They were interested in my situation and they loved me just as I am.”

After receiving assistance at the center for about a year and a half, Joseph decided he wanted to do more than just receive. Approaching Giorgio, Joseph told him that he would like to join the ADRA volunteer team and help others coming to the center, because he understood what they were going through. Giorgio agreed, and Joseph has now been serving as an ADRA volunteer for nearly a year.

“My life has really changed since I first came here,” said Joseph. “It’s changed because instead of thinking about my own needs, I’m listening to and thinking about the needs of others. And listening to others has even helped me to listen more to my wife and children. I can’t change the world, but I change small things that can help the people here. I’m happy that I’ve learned from Giorgio how to do that.”

Too Little Space

Many people who become acquainted with Giorgio want to know more about his church. The area where the Ragusa Adventists meet, however, is too small to accommodate all who would like to come. Part of this quarter’s Thirteenth Sabbath Offering will help to build a much-needed Seventh-day Adventist Church in Ragusa. 🌐

The Son of a Shaman

SICILY | November 19

Muyi and Giorgio



Muyi grew up a long way from Italy in the west African country of Nigeria. He came from a long line of shaman (witch doctors). His grandfather had been a shaman, his father was a shaman, and Muyi was in line to be the next shaman of his village.

Shaman are very powerful people in their communities. Considered to have special access to the spirit world and ability to communicate with the dead, shaman are often contacted for healing, for protection against evil spirits, or for putting a curse on someone.

Even though he had access to this power, somehow Muyi was not interested in following in his father's footsteps. In addition to practicing shamanism, Muyi's father was also a polygamist, with three wives. However, when his father took a third wife, Muyi's mother—the first wife—

left home and Muyi did not see her for more than eleven years.

Receiving no love at home, Muyi lived the unsettled life of a hooligan and was often getting into trouble. One night, a Christian pastor approached Muyi.

"What are you doing out at this time?" he asked. Muyi could sense the concern in the pastor's voice and told him everything about what he was going through.

Moved with compassion for the young man, the pastor longed to introduce him to a better way. He introduced Muyi to Jesus and invited him to visit his church. Muyi accepted the invitation and began attending the pastor's church regularly—even becoming a choir member. Before long, he accepted Christ as his Savior.

Although Muyi's father was glad that his son was no longer living the life of a hooligan, he was not at all pleased that

Muyi had become a Christian. “It was like living in two worlds,” said Muyi of being a Christian believer in the home of a shaman.

Eventually, Muyi married a young woman named Giory (Gee-ory). Although he no longer lived in his father’s home, Muyi still received a lot of pressure to renounce his Christianity and join his family tradition of becoming a shaman. Nevertheless, Muyi would not give up his Christian faith.

Not long after this, Muyi’s father died and Muyi and his wife moved to Libya, where Muyi worked in construction and furniture making. While there, Muyi became friends with two Libyan men who helped him and Giory, who was expecting their first child, move to Italy.

The couple ended up in the city of Ragusa on the island of Sicily. Not long after arriving in Italy, their son, Joseph, was born. Muyi was able to get work in a furniture factory and for a few years all went well for the family. But then several workers at the factory were laid off, including Muyi, and the family again fell on hard times.

One day, a teacher at Joseph’s primary school approached Muyi, telling him that there was a training school he could attend to learn new skills, including the Italian language. “At the completion of the coursework, you will receive a certificate and with those certificates it will be easier to get a job,” she told him.

Muyi decided to enroll. The Italian language classes and practical work classes were being offered at the business place of Giorgio Bella, a Seventh-day Adventist who was seeking to minister to the needs of the community in Ragusa (see last week’s story, “Fully Engaged”).

Fast Facts

- Etna, the greatest active volcano in Europe, is on Sicily’s eastern coast.
- Extra-virgin olive oil, juicy red oranges and the sweet grapes of Canicattì, Pachino tomatoes and Pantelleria capers, prickly pears and the olives of Nocellara del Belice are some of the excellent products that distinguish Sicilian food.
- Sicily is rich in ancient Greek ruins, and many say that they surpass in beauty those found in modern-day Greece.

“It was by the grace of God that I learned about these programs,” Muyi said later as he reflected on his classroom experience. “The classes were very good. Everyone was very friendly. They took us, not as students, but as their own sisters and brothers.”

Even so, the classes were challenging. “They tried their best to make sure that we learned the material in the classes, including the Italian language,” said Muyi. “And I had to put my mind to it. If my mind wasn’t in it, I couldn’t have learned it.”

Muyi is grateful for the assistance given to him and is looking forward to putting his new skills to work. But even more importantly, his life has been positively changed through the love and care shown to him by the Seventh-day Adventists in Ragusa.

This quarter, part of the Thirteenth Sabbath Offering will help to build a much needed church building in Ragusa, Italy. Please plan on giving generously. Thank you. 🌍

An Undeniable Call, Part 1

FRANCE | November 26

Richard



photo: iStockimages.com

I was born in Casablanca, Morocco in 1956, the same year that the country gained independence from France. I was born into an Orthodox Jewish family. My grandfather was a very successful businessman exporting spices.

My family had lived in Morocco for nearly 500 years. Before that we were in Spain—Sephardic Jews. But in 1492 the Queen of Spain ruled that Jews had to either convert to Catholicism or leave the country—and leave all of their possessions behind. Most Jews left Spain and went to Portugal, The Netherlands, Turkey, Morocco, and other countries of North Africa. My ancestors went to Morocco.

I was eight years old when my parents decided to leave Morocco. Because it was no longer safe for Jews to live in a Muslim country, all of my relatives progressively left that country. Some went to Canada, others to Israel, but my

father preferred to be in France.

We moved to the city of Marseilles in 1964, but my father couldn't find work there, so we went to Paris, where he started a men's clothing shop. He started simply by just selling undershirts, underwear, and socks. He then expanded his inventory with men's shirts, then pullovers, and finally suits. Business went so well that he opened a second shop.

Life in Villejuif

When we first arrived in Paris, houses were much more expensive than in Morocco, so we lived in a suburb called Villejuif, which means "Jewish City." Ironically, by that time there was no synagogue, no rabbinical school, nothing that would indicate the place was once a Jewish city.

I started attending public school in Villejuif when I was nine. My life was

Jewish, but at the same time, very liberal. By the time I was 11, I could go out when I wanted. I was free to go out with girls and do whatever I wanted to do. I could organize parties with music and dancing. I could go to the discothèque or to the cinema. I was never afraid; society was safer than today.

In 1968 there was a student revolution on the streets of Paris. All universities and schools were stopped. The president resigned. It was very serious. The motto of these people was freedom— independence. This penetrated all the French society, and that was the spirit of my parents at this time.

A Religious Side

But there was also a religious side to my family—my father was doing his prayers morning, afternoon, and evening. And the beginning of the Sabbath was very important. On Friday evening I had to be at home for the beginning of the Sabbath, when we had worship at home with all the Jewish rituals. But there was a problem because we had no synagogue.

We were living on a small property with three connected villas—one was occupied by my cousin, the second was occupied by my family, and the third was occupied by a young rabbinical student (who later became a great rabbi in France) and his wife and children.

Since we were three religious families living close to each other, we organized Sabbath worship together. It was like a home synagogue—on Friday evenings, on Sabbath mornings, and on the Jewish feast days.

Then my cousin decided to emigrate to Israel. So my father asked the owner of the property if she would allow us to organize

the villa where my cousin had been living into a place of prayer. She agreed, and so my father organized it like a real synagogue. We even had the privilege of having an ark with the scroll of the Torah. In my young mind, this place became very holy because we were using this villa only as a place of prayer. For me, God was dwelling in the ark where the scroll of the Torah was.

An Urgent Prayer

One day I was playing with my older brother and I closed the door of our house hard. This door was special because it was made of wood and in the middle was very beautiful—and very expensive—decorated glass. When I slammed the door, the beautiful glass shattered all over the floor.

I was very sorry, and I was afraid of how my father would react because he had a hot temper. I dreaded when he would come home that evening and see what I had done.

I decided to go next door to the synagogue—our family had the keys. I went to the ark, because in my mind, God was there. I knelt there and started to pray: “God, I believe You exist, but I’ve never tested your existence. Now I want you to show me that You really exist. You’ve seen what happened at my house. You know how my father is easily upset. Please help it be that when my father comes home this evening that he won’t say anything when he sees the broken glass.”

I was sure this was an impossible prayer, but I waited for the evening to arrive when my father would come home. 🌍

To be continued.

An Undeniable Call, Part 2

FRANCE | December 3

Richard



Editor's Note: Richard had been playing with his older brother when he accidentally broke the beautiful glass in the front door of their home. Terrified of his father's reaction, Richard pled with God to keep his father from becoming upset.

When he arrived, my father saw the door with the broken glass. He asked, "Who did this?"

I answered, "Me."

Then he asked, "Are you hurt? Are you OK?"

He told me that the main thing was that I was safe and unhurt. He said that the glass wasn't important to him—but that I was. His reaction was astonishing to me, and I believe that it was a direct answer from God. From that time on I was absolutely sure, 100 percent, that God exists. I never questioned the existence

of God because of this experience that happened when I was ten.

Expanding the Synagogue

Because my father's business was doing well, we were able to buy a home in Villejuif. When we moved, my father explained to the owner of the villa we had been renting that the experience of the synagogue was very good, and we would now like to remove the wall attaching the two villas together so that we could have a bigger synagogue. The owner kindly agreed, and this synagogue became the official synagogue of Villejuif.

One year later, I did my Bar Mitzvah there, and it is also where I did the course of Talmud Torah where we learned Hebrew, and Jewish prayers, rituals, feasts, and Bible. We had Thursdays and Sundays free from school and during those mornings all the Jewish boys of Villejuif went to the synagogue to be prepared for the Bar Mitzvah. Bar Mitzvah means "Son of Commandment." I was 12.

Introduced as a Jew

I continued my life with my Gentile

friends in public school. One of these friends came from an Adventist family, but I didn't know it at the time. His name was Emmanuel. His father was Manuel and his mother was Manuela. They were a Spanish family who had come from Barcelona.

Then one day a group of us went to Emmanuel's home. When we arrived, he introduced me as "a Jew" to his parents. For me, this was quite strange because he had never introduced me as a Jew before. His father was very interested. I later discovered that Manuel was very missionary-minded. No one could leave his home without being given many materials to convert him to Christianity. Before becoming an Adventist, this man had been a very militant communist, wanting to convert everyone to communism.

He said, "Oh, you are a Jew. That's very interesting. You know that we are spiritual Jews." I asked him, "What's that? I've never heard about spiritual Jews. I know about Catholics, Protestants, even Jehovah's Witnesses, but spiritual Jews?"

"Yes," Manuel answered. "You know, you are safe here. We eat Kosher food."

They weren't vegetarian, but always went to the kosher quarter of Paris to buy their meat and other things.

"And we keep Shabbat in my family," he added.

I was intrigued, but at the time not very interested in religion. But every time I came to his home, Manuel showed me some texts from the Bible. I told him, "That's your Bible, not my Bible. It's not correct." But he told me, "You can check it with your Bible."

So I took the reference and checked it with my Jewish Bible and saw that it was the same as in Manuel's Bible. But then I didn't think anymore about it.

A year passed and I started to date Manuel's daughter, Lilliane. Manuel wasn't very happy about this because he wanted his daughter to marry an Adventist. But he continued to work on me.

One day he asked, "Why don't you come to our church to see how it is?" I said, "Why not?"

So on Sabbath morning, when my parents thought I was going to school, I went to the Adventist church instead. I found the Sabbath School program very interesting. The teacher was the son of an Adventist pastor who had been president of the Israel Field a few years earlier. He had lived in Israel and knew Hebrew and his Bible very well. I enjoyed listening to his lesson, and afterward told Manuel that it was good and that I would come again. From that time, I started going to the Adventist church instead of school on Sabbath. But my father thought I was at school.

A Real Shock

Progressively, the Holy Spirit worked on my heart as He led me step by step. But then something terrible happened. Lilliane's father, Manuel, was an electrician who repaired elevators. One day at work, Manuel suddenly felt ill. He lost his balance and fell down the elevator shaft. Badly injured, he was rushed to the hospital where he later died.

This was a real shock for me. Manuel was young and strong—just 47 years old. And he was a strong believer in Christ. This experience helped me to think more deeply about life and death. 🌍

To be continued.

An Undeniable Call, Part 3

FRANCE | December 10

Richard



I went to Manuel’s funeral and listened to the pastor’s sermon. After the service I made an appointment to meet with the pastor. When we met I told him that I wanted to know more about the Seventh-day Adventist religion, and asked if he could give me Bible studies. He was happy to do this, and Lilliane and I studied together with him.

Telling My Parents

Because I was getting more serious with Lilliane, I wanted my parents to know about our relationship. They were not at all happy because they wanted me to marry a Jewish girl. They told me, “Don’t go with her. You’re young—there are plenty of other girls.” But they couldn’t dissuade me from going with Lilliane.

Then my father had another idea. “Why don’t you go to Canada? I’ll pay for you to

go there and study.” Eight of his sisters had immigrated to Canada.

At first, I wasn’t convinced. But then one day when I wasn’t happy—and I don’t know why—I went to my father’s shop and told him, “OK. I’ll go to Canada. Give me the money.” Without saying a word to Lilliane, I bought the ticket and left.

Later I heard that she cried and her parents tried to comfort her. She somehow got the address of my aunt of where I was staying in Canada, and she wrote me a letter. I had been there just three weeks, but when I received this letter, my heart was moved. I bought another ticket and returned to France.

My father wasn’t happy. He tried everything to dissuade us, but when he saw how serious it was, he invited Lilliane to our home and tried to convince her

to convert to Judaism. But then he discovered that it was me who was being progressively converted to Adventism.

He told me, “Your ancestors lost everything in so many countries because they refused to be converted, and suddenly you’re going to be converted? If you do that, you’ll become a persecutor of the Jewish people just like all the Christians.”

Then my father spoke with the rabbis—a lot of rabbis. They decided that these rabbis would come to our home to try to convince me not to become a Christian. For one month, a different rabbi came to our home every evening.

“Jesus wasn’t a good guy,” they told me. “He’s a legend, a false prophet.” They would tell me all kinds of arguments. But when my father saw that nothing could change my mind, he decided to throw me out of his home.

“You are no longer my son,” he said. And then he mourned for me as if I had died.

“I Can’t Change My Mind”

I went to live in the home of the Adventist pastor, and was working as an accountant at the E’cole Hotel. Two weeks after my father had thrown me out of the house, my parents came to see me at work. My father pled with me to change my mind about becoming a Christian and come back home.

“I can’t change my mind,” I told him.

“Please don’t do this,” he begged.

After the discussion they left, and I didn’t see my father again for ten years. My mother was a more understanding person, but my father forbade her from

seeing me. He threatened to divorce her if she came to see me. But she had her own clothing business in the marketplace, so sometimes I was able to see her there.

A year after we started Bible studies, Lilliane and I were baptized and married. We were married in a civil marriage on Friday. On Sabbath we were baptized, and on Sunday we had a religious ceremony at the Adventist Church. On Monday we went to Israel.

We stayed in Israel three weeks. While there I discovered that there were only 50 Adventist members in the country. The pastor told us, “We can’t do any evangelization among the Jews.” But this pastor wasn’t a Jew and I knew it wasn’t true because I was a Jew.

When I saw this situation, I cried. As Lilliane tried to comfort me, I told her, “One day, I will be a pastor here.” I don’t know why I said that, because at that time I hadn’t yet decided to be a pastor, but from the moment I said it, I had the strong feeling that God was calling me to be a pastor—and specifically among the Jews.

Post Note

Richard Elofer studied at the Adventist university in Collonges and became a pastor. He served in Israel for many years before returning to Paris to work with the Jewish population and establish a Jewish-Adventist Friendship Center there. Part of the Thirteenth Sabbath Offering this quarter will be used to help purchase property for this new center. Thank you for your generous support. 🌍

“Live to a 10+”, Part 1

ROMANIA | December 10

Pastor Daniel & Mrs. Alina



The project began with a simple challenge — “Give God one hour a day.” This was a promise that Pastor Daniel Chirileanu took seriously. While serving as a conference youth director, he and other youth leaders were challenged by the Romanian Union youth director to write on a piece of paper what they would do for God that year.

What better way than to spend an hour with God planning on how to reach and nurture young people? Pastor Daniel decided.

“That was the most productive year for me,” he said. “I promised God one hour a day and I had to do it. The hour I chose was from 11 p.m. to midnight because I knew I would be free then.”

During that hour, Pastor Daniel sometimes brainstormed about the needs of young people and listed things that came to mind. When no ideas came, he

often spent the hour in prayer, or reading in that subject area.

“But in any case that time wasn’t mine,” he said. “It was God’s.”

“What If We Could . . .”

Then one night a particularly interesting idea struck. “What if we could involve our highly educated members—the intellectuals in our church—with reaching out to young people (many of whom are secular) in an academic setting? What if we could offer a successful lifestyle program for students at public schools?”

As he thought more about it, the idea took shape with three main goals. The project would:

1. Educate children and youth in successful life skills.
2. Develop relationships with teachers and others in academic settings.
3. Encourage children who participate in the program to join activities such as

Fast Facts

- Romania's Carpathian Mountains are home to 400 unique species of mammals, including the Carpathian chamois, a kind of mountain goat.
- The largest population of brown bears in Europe lives in Romania.
- Timisoara, in Romania, was the first European city to be lit by electric street lamps, back in 1884.

Pathfinders and other Adventist youth ministry programs.

Opening the Door

Before approaching the schools with his idea, Pastor Daniel encouraged the Adventists in his conference to be involved with many types of public outreach activities, such as anti-smoking rallies and other health education initiatives.

“And when the schools saw that we were interested in this area, and not just interested, but that we also have excellent educational materials, they asked us to help them,” said Pastor Daniel.

It was the open door for which he had been searching and praying. Meeting with school principals and teachers, Pastor Daniel listened to their needs and concerns. As the country of Romania has six separate regions, all being different culturally, economically, and socially, the group wanted to design a package that would fit the needs of their region.

So with the assistance of the teachers, Pastor Daniel did a survey among the students and found that in the cities the greatest need was in combating addictions and in more rural areas it was in teaching children how to behave in society—moral

and behavioral issues. Another need that became clear was to help young people in career guidance. One more need that was clear at all age levels was learning how to live healthfully.

Based on this information, Pastor Daniel was able to put together an age-appropriate education program based on the children's and young people's interests and specific needs of the region.

Warmly Received

The school administrators and teachers were delighted. The program, called “Live to a 10+ Level”^{*} would be offered as an extra-curricular activity and would feature diverse themes and seminars for every grade level and age. Some of the areas included would be health and nutrition, dealing with addictions, personal development and good manners, social relationships and problems specific to the teen years, personal finance, the impact of technology and how to use the internet responsibly, and more.

“The only condition they imposed was that we don't present religious seminars in the schools,” said Pastor Daniel. “But we can invite the students and teachers to come to our Adventist youth camp for a special program where we have devotionals, pray, sing religious songs, and do other activities together.”

The one-week camp has proven to be a success with 80 to 130 students attending each year. Teachers are invited to attend the camp along with their students, and they become part of the supervising team. At times, school principals also attend. 🌐

To be continued.

^{*} A “10+” is equivalent to an “A+” in letter grading academic systems.

“Live To A 10+”, Part 2

ROMANIA | December 17

Happy ‘10+’ Teens



Teachers: Please briefly review last week’s story before presenting part 2.

Camp Challenge

Pastor Daniel tells of one principal who came to camp because her daughter was attending. This school principal was against having any spiritual activities and had a special dislike for Seventh-day Adventists.

“During the first few days of the camp, she was so against spiritual activities that we couldn’t even pray with the children before meals,” recalled Pastor Daniel. Rather than presenting their regular devotionals, staff were forced to present spiritual lessons in a less direct way by using objects.

During one of these periods, Pastor Daniel asked the children to compare an ink printer cartridge with their parents. The daughter of the challenging school

principal stood up and gave a beautiful, heartfelt response about her mother. As she spoke, the daughter mentioned that she had learned from an Adventist girl at the camp how to pray and that she prays for her mother every night.

Surprised and touched, the mother began to cry. “Do you really pray for me?” she asked. The girl assured her mother that she did indeed pray for her every night.

The mother’s heart was softened. Prayer and devotions and other spiritual activities at the camp were no longer a problem for this woman; in fact, she encouraged them!

For the next five years, this school principal continued coming to the camp and recommended to the county school board that the Adventists be allowed to provide classes and seminars to all of the schools in her area. God works in wonderful ways!

Pastor Daniel Chirileanu is now serving as the youth director for the

Mission Post

- The religion of the people in Romania is predominantly Romanian Orthodox. Other religious groups include Roman Catholics, Greek Catholics, various Protestant denominations, Jews and, in the southeastern regions, Muslims.
- According to historical records, there were around 50,000 Sabbath-keepers in the Transylvanian region of Romania in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.
- Today, there are 1,104 Seventh-day Adventist churches and 65,961 Adventist members in Romania.
- Watch *Mission Spotlight* for more stories from EUD. Go to www.adventistmission.org/dvd to download your free copy.

Romanian Union, where he works with the conference directors in coordinating the healthy lifestyle program across the country.

Growing Partnerships

Teofil Brasov is the project manager for the Muntenia Conference in Romania. Currently, his conference has 50 partnerships with middle and high schools to offer the “Live to a 10+ Level” classes. These partnerships cover the schools in eight of the ten counties in the Muntenia Conference. Additionally, the conference has partnerships with six school board administrations.

Last year, approximately 2,400 students in Pastor Brasov’s area participated in the classes organized by the Adventists, and the number is growing. In addition to offering the extra-curricular classes for the students and the optional camp, the youth

department organizes teacher conventions held over a weekend shortly before the school year begins.

“During the convention, we present the ‘Live to a 10+’ project to them,” says Pastor Teofil. “We also cover areas of personal development for teachers by offering several seminars of interest. At the same time, we use these conventions to encourage teachers from the same area to get to know each other and form a nucleus. At last year’s convention, which was held at our conference youth center, we had 90 non-Adventist teachers present.

Making the World a Better Place

“We want to make the world a better place, and to share the values that we think are important,” Pastor Teofil continues. “One of our greatest needs is to expand the number of our trainers—all of whom are volunteers—and of course, to have the means of instructing them.”

Part of the money from the Thirteenth Sabbath Offering will be used to expand the materials used in these programs. Some of the funds will be used to pay for the teachers’ conventions, which are offered free to the teachers, and another portion will be used to cover costs at the summer camps.

“As a pastor, I see this as a way to take the mission further,” says Pastor Teofil. “I preach and have contact with the members on Sabbath, but this is a way of making things practical during the week. It helps us to do something for the community—and especially for the young people.”

Thank you for giving generously to the Thirteenth Sabbath Offering this quarter, a portion of which will help this special outreach in Romania. 🌍

Thirteenth Sabbath Program

➤	Opening Song	“Rescue the Perishing” <i>Seventh-day Adventist Hymnal</i> , No. 367
➤	Welcome	Superintendent or Sabbath School teacher
➤	Prayer	
➤	Program	“European Exam for Youth and Adults”
➤	Offering	
➤	Closing Song	“Seeking the Lost” <i>Seventh-day Adventist Hymnal</i> , No. 373
➤	Closing Prayer	

Due to space constraints this quarter, (14 weeks rather than the usual 13 weeks), the Thirteenth Sabbath Program is available to download at www.adventistmission.org/Resources

Future Thirteenth Sabbath Projects

Hope Channel Poland team members and some who have found Christ through this ministry hold architectural plans for a new Hope TV studio in Warsaw. The Trans-European Division will be featured next quarter where, in addition to Poland, projects in Ireland, Norway and Croatia will be funded in part by your Thirteenth Sabbath Offering.



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 European countries featured in this quarterly visit your local library or a travel agency, or visit the websites listed below.

Many websites feature European countries. The following websites are a hub for useful material about each country:

Italy: www.italia.it/

Romania: <http://romaniatourism.com>

France: <http://about-france.com>

Austria: www.lonelyplanet.com/austria

You may also find these denominational websites helpful:

Inter-European Division: eud.adventist.org

Austrian Union of Churches: www.adventisten.at

Franco-Belgian Union Conference: www.adventiste.org

Italian Union of Churches Conference: www.avventisti.it

Romanian Union Conference: www.adventist.ro

Be sure to download your free *Mission Spotlight* DVD, featuring video reports from around East-Central Africa and beyond. Download or stream from the Adventist Mission website at: www.adventistmission.org/resources.

Mission Quarterlies Facebook Page. Read and share mission stories online, see pictures, take a peek behind the scenes of gathering stories and make comments—all on our Facebook page at www.facebook.com/mission-quarterlies.

Get your FREE Thirteenth Sabbath Offering Bank by sending an email to: missionquarterlies@gc.adventist.org. Please indicate the number of offering banks you are requesting and a complete mailing address.

Ask your Sabbath School council to set a quarterly mission offering goal (set the goal a little higher than last quarter and divide it by 14, one part for each of the 12 regular Sabbaths this quarter and two parts for Thirteenth Sabbath). Chart the weekly progress toward the quarter's goal on a goal device.

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 Trans-European 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. This immediate feedback will encourage members to continue their mission giving.

YOUTH & ADULT MISSION

EDITORIAL

Gina Wahlen Editor/Writer

Wendy Trim Editorial Assistant

Emily Harding Layout and Design

OFFICE OF ADVENTIST MISSION

Gary Krause Director

Rick Kajjura Communication Director

Homer Trecartin Study Centers Director

Jeff Scoggins Planning Director

COMMUNICATION STAFF

Gina Wahlen Editor, *Mission*

Laurie Falvo Projects Manager

Ricky Oliveras Video Producer

Earley Simon Video Producer

Website: www.AdventistMission.org

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