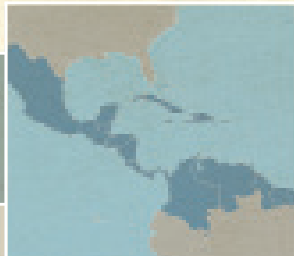




YOUTH & ADULT MISSION

2021 • **QUARTER 2** • INTER-AMERICAN DIVISION



AdventistMission.org

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 = stories of special interest to teens

Your Offerings at Work



Your Thirteenth Sabbath Offering three years ago helped construct a new wing for Southeast Hospital, a Seventh-day Adventist facility, in Villahermosa, Mexico. The new wing (the gray building in the background) is expected to open in 2024. Read stories from Villahermosa on pages 18-27.



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Opportunities

The Thirteenth Sabbath Offering this quarter will help the Inter-American Division to open 13 Better Living centers of influence, one at each of the following:

- Antillean Adventist University (Puerto Rican Union), Puerto Rico
- Colombia Adventist University (North Colombian Union), Colombia
- Cuba Adventist Theological Seminary (Cuban Union), Cuba
- Dominican Adventist University (Dominican Union), Dominican Republic
- Haitian Adventist University Academy (Haitian Union), Haiti
- Linda Vista University (Southeast Mexican Union), Mexico
- Navojoa University (North Mexican Union), Mexico
- Montemorelos University (North Mexican Union), Mexico
- Northern Caribbean University (Jamaica Union), Jamaica
- Central America Adventist University (South Central American Union), Costa Rica
- University of the Southern Caribbean (Caribbean Union), Trinidad
- Adventist University Institute of Venezuela (West Venezuela Union), Venezuela
- Belize Adventist Junior College (Belize Union), Belize

This quarter we feature the Inter-American Division, which includes countries and territories in the Caribbean Sea, Central America, and the northern part of South America. The region is home to nearly 300 million people and has a Seventh-day Adventist membership of 3.75 million. That's a ratio of one Adventist for every 80 people.

This quarter's Thirteenth Sabbath projects are unique: All thirteen universities and colleges in the division will receive part of the Thirteenth Sabbath Offering to establish a Better Living "center of influence" where students can train to become missionaries. You can find a list of the institutions of higher learning on this page.

Thank you for your Thirteenth Sabbath Offering three years ago that helped fund projects at Antillean Adventist University in Puerto Rico, University of the Southern Caribbean in Trinidad and Tobago, and Southeast Hospital in Mexico. You can read stories from University of the Southern Caribbean on pages 4 and 8 and from Southeast Hospital on pages 18-21.

You can download the PDF version of the youth and adult *Mission* magazine at bit.ly/adultmission and the *Children's Mission* magazine at bit.ly/childrensmision. Mission Spotlight videos are available at bit.ly/missionspotlight.

Thank you for encouraging your congregation to be mission-minded! 🌐

Girls or God?



TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO | April 3

Daniel Amattaeran, 29

Spirit might be speaking to him. He liked the fame and fun of the world.

“God, not now, not now,” Daniel said.

He resolved to dance until he was old and then, when he couldn’t dance anymore, go to church.

Daniel began to have nightmares about being attacked by demons. One night he dreamed about the Second Coming. He saw Christ, wearing white, in the clouds. The world was ablaze with fire, and people were running about and screaming.

Daniel woke up with his heart pounding. “I am lost. I am lost. I am lost,” he thought. “I have to come back to God.”

But he didn’t.

Several years passed and, at the age of 19, he moved in with non-Christian relatives as he studied at college. One day, he noticed a DVD titled “The Truth About Hip-Hop” on the table. It was from a Christian ministry, so he was surprised to see it in the non-Christian home. “Who bought this?” he asked his relatives. No one knew where the DVD had come from.

Daniel watched it and was astonished to hear that hip-hop has gangster origins and is associated with murder, violence, and illegal drugs. He was confused. “Hip-hop seems to be connected closely with evil things,” he thought. “I don’t like that. I thought it was just about singing, having fun, and having lots of girls.”

He asked a dance friend if the DVD’s content was true. “It’s not true,” the friend

When Daniel was 11, a neighborhood boy introduced him to hip-hop dancing in Suriname’s capital, Paramarebo.

Daniel had seen the dancing on television but never in real life. He was amazed at the flips, handstands, and people jumping on one hand. He noticed that girls liked to watch the dancing, and he wanted girls to watch him. He learned how to dance. Daniel loved dancing, and he won local talent shows and even a trip to the Netherlands. His popularity soared, and girls crowded around him.

One day Daniel was sitting on his bed, thinking, and he sensed a voice asking, “What do you want to do with your life?”

Surprised, he wondered whether the voice might be the Holy Spirit. His parents had taken him to church as a young boy but hadn’t attended in years. Daniel didn’t like the idea that the Holy

said. “Anyway, who cares?”

Daniel kept dancing — but he also started going to church with an Adventist cousin. Halfway through monthlong evangelistic meetings, he stood when the preacher asked those who wished to be baptized to come to the front. But his whole body was trembling. He sensed two voices arguing in his mind.

“Are you going to leave dancing for this?” one voice said. “Are you going to leave money, girls, and fame?”

“Choose Jesus,” the other voice said. “He is the only way.”

As he wavered over whether to go to the front, the preacher urged those who were undecided to come forward.

Daniel thought about money, fame, and girls — and sat down.

At home that night, he fell on his knees and prayed, “God, if you want me to repent, show me a sign tomorrow. Give me the strength to walk forward if the preacher makes an appeal again.”

The next night, the preacher made another appeal. Daniel stood, and his whole body trembled violently. Again, he sensed two arguing voices.

“God,” he prayed, “give me the strength to take a first step to the front.”

At that moment, he felt a gentle push on his back. He took a step forward. After that, it was easy to take the second step, and soon he was standing at the front.

Today, Daniel is 29 and studying to be a pastor at the University of the Southern Caribbean. He also calls himself a Facebook evangelist, posting inspirational videos and giving Bible studies on Facebook for six years. Twenty-four people have been baptized as a result.

“God has been gracious to me,” he said.

Story Tips

- Watch Daniel on YouTube: bit.ly/Daniel-Amattaeran.
- Download photos on Facebook (bit.ly/fb-mq).
- Download mission posts and fast facts from the Inter-American Division at: bit.ly/IAD-Facts.

Mission Post

- Adventist teachings were probably introduced to Trinidad and Tobago about 1879 through literature sent from England. As early as 1880 or 1881, a group of Sabbath keepers, led by James R. Braithwaite, met in Tobago. By the early 1880s, Adventist literature was being sent to Trinidad and Tobago by the International Tract and Missionary Society (ITMS) in the United States. The first specific positive response to Adventist teachings in Trinidad came through a copy of Ellen White’s “Patriarchs and Prophets,” which was passed to an individual who became one of the first Sabbath keepers on the island.

“So I take mission seriously.” 🌐

Thank you for your Thirteenth Sabbath Offering three years ago to construct the first-ever church building at the University of the Southern Caribbean, where Daniel studies, in Trinidad and Tobago. Thank you for remembering the university with this quarter’s Thirteenth Sabbath Offering, which will help open a Better Living “center of influence” on the campus to train students to be missionaries.

By Andrew McChesney



Drive-by Shooting

Chenelle Spooner, 31

Thirty-one-year-old Chenelle heard the loud *rat-tat-tat* of semi-automatic gunfire during a teacher-training session in Trinidad and Tobago's capital, Port of Spain.

Teachers jumped to their feet and ran to the third-floor window. On the street, a man was fleeing on foot from a white car. The gunfire was coming from the car. A few teachers screamed in fright, and everyone ducked down for safety as the car passed by the school. For two long minutes they waited. Finally the loud rattle of gunfire stopped, and Chenelle heard the scared shrieks of schoolchildren. She wept. This was the second time in seven months that she had heard gunfire.

Teachers went downstairs to comfort the frightened schoolchildren. Chenelle, who was helping direct the training, left the school. Police officers were already outside, asking drivers to move their parked cars. But a police officer forbade

her from even approaching her car.

"Can I at least see my car?" she asked.

An officer led her to her black vehicle. Bullet holes riddled its windows. Chenelle was shocked. She had bought the car less than two years earlier.

Chenelle later learned that two people, including a small boy, had been grazed by bullets in the attack. No one had been killed. In a stroke of providence, many children had been excused from school that afternoon so the teachers could have their training session. Her car had suffered heavy damage because the man who had been targeted by the gunman had fled on foot from his own car and had hidden behind her car.

That night at home, Chenelle thanked God for His protection.

"Thank you, God, for saving me and all the people who were in close proximity to the gunfire," she prayed. "Thanks for Your continued protection over my life."

As she thought about the attack, she remembered a conversation that she had had a day earlier. While waiting for an oil change for her car, she and an attendant had discussed how people take their cars too seriously, even putting them before God. During the conversation, Chenelle told him about hearing semi-automatic gunfire on a highway seven months earlier. The car involved in the shooting had crashed into the left side of her car, badly damaging it. After that accident, Chenelle decided that Christ was more important than her car. “I could lose my car tomorrow, but as long as Christ spares my life, I will keep serving Him,” Chenelle told the attendant.

The next day, on June 12, 2019, the gunfire erupted outside the school.

After the school shooting, several coworkers advised Chenelle to sell her car.

“Sell your car,” said one. “It has demonic energy in it.”

“Yes, get rid of it,” said another. “Something is wrong with that car.”

But Chenelle saw no reason to sell.

“It is not about the car,” she said. “We should not put our focus on material things. We should put our focus on God.”

She believes that her car is a witness to God’s goodness.

“It’s really about God protecting us as we keep our faith and proclaim His name through difficult times,” she said. 🌐

Thank you for your Thirteenth Sabbath Offering three years ago to construct the first-ever church building at the University of the Southern Caribbean in Chenelle’s homeland, Trinidad and Tobago. Thank you for remembering the university with this

Story Tips

- Watch Chenelle on YouTube: bit.ly/Chenelle-Spooner.
- Download photos on Facebook (bit.ly/fb-mq).
- Download mission posts and fast facts from the Inter-American Division at: bit.ly/IAD-Facts.

Fast Facts

- Inhabited mainly by people of African and indigenous descent, Trinidad and Tobago has a per-capita income well above the average for Latin America and the Caribbean because of its large reserves of oil and gas. However, dependence on these reserves has left the country vulnerable to world crude prices. The price crash during the 1980s and 1990s resulted in a large foreign debt and widespread unemployment.
- Trinidad and Tobago is a major trans-shipment point for cocaine and, like many other countries in the area, has been troubled by drug- and gang-related violence.
- Although English is the official language, most people speak Trinidad English, a creole language.
- In 1498, Christopher Columbus visited the islands. Legend has it he named Trinidad after the three peaks at its south-east corner and Tobago after a local type of tobacco pipe.

quarter’s Thirteenth Sabbath Offering, which will help open a Better Living “center of influence” on the campus to train students to be missionaries.

By Andrew McChesney

God Makes No Mistakes



TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO | April 17

Crystal White, 32

Many children who live on Caribbean islands have nicknames.

Crystal White has a sister named Catherine. But everyone calls her Polly because she is like a parrot and talks a lot.

Crystal has another sister named Rochelle. But everyone calls her Mopsi because is as skinny as a mop stick.

Crystal's father called her Ugly.

He gave her the nickname one day while she was sitting on the stairs in their house in Cumuto village in Trinidad and Tobago. As Father passed her on the stairs, he patted her on the leg.

"Hi, Ugly," he said.

Crystal felt horrible. Children sometimes called her names at school, but now her own father was making fun of her at home.

"I'm not ugly," Crystal protested.

Father didn't reconsider his words.

"You are the ugliest child that I ever made," he said.

Crystal felt even worse. Father had ten children. Now she actually felt ugly.

Father's words changed her life. She began to struggle with depression and considered suicide. She starved herself because she thought that she would be pretty if she were thin.

Every day after school, she stared into the mirror in her bedroom and picked herself apart.

"Why did you forehead have to be so big?" she thought, tears streaming down her cheeks. "Why did your teeth have to be so big? Why did you have to be so fat?"

One day as she stood in front of the mirror, picking herself apart and crying, she heard a song come on over the radio.

"Always remember that you are so beautiful," the musician sang. "Always remember that you are fearfully and wonderfully made by God. You are a child of Jesus Christ the Lord."

The words surprised Crystal. She thought, "If I am fearfully and wonderfully made by God and I am picking apart everything, then I am telling God that He made a mistake."

She cried harder and asked God for forgiveness. Her tears of sadness and pity were transformed into tears of joy. She decided to see herself through Christ's eyes rather than the eyes of people. For the first time, at the age of 17, she began to see herself through Jesus' eyes. The words of Psalms 139:14 took on a new meaning, and she read with joy, "I will praise You, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made; marvelous are Your works, and that my soul knows very well."

She began to eat again. Corn soup with potatoes, cassava, carrots, pumpkin and dasheen root tasted good!

She no longer felt worthless. She had a reason to live.

Instead of feeling sorry for herself, she learned to put everything in God's hands. She began to trust God, not just for daily needs but for her joy as well. She realized that no one could take away the joy that comes from God.

Whenever someone called her names, she just ignored it. When Father called her "Ugly," she remembered that God had made her.

"This is the way God made me," she told herself. "God makes no mistakes."

Today, Crystal is 33 and a church leader who loves telling young people about her God who makes no mistakes.

"I feel like I didn't have anyone in my corner when I was young," she said. "I want to be the person who tells others that God has a purpose for them, just like He has for me." 🌍

Thank you for your Thirteenth Sabbath Offering three years ago to construct the first-ever church building at Crystal's alma mater, University of the Southern Caribbean, in Trinidad and Tobago.

Story Tips

Watch Crystal on YouTube:
bit.ly/Crystal-White.

- Download photos on Facebook (bit.ly/fb-mq).
- Download mission posts and fast facts from the Inter-American Division at: bit.ly/IAD-Facts.

Fast Facts

- From 1802 to 1814, Britain obtained first Trinidad and then Tobago from Spain and France, respectively and, in 1889, Trinidad and Tobago was combined as a single British colony. The country became an independent republic in 1976.
- Slavery was abolished in Trinidad and Tobago in 1834 and indentured laborers were then brought in from India to work on the sugar plantations. Today, Hindus make up around a quarter of the population of Trinidad and Tobago.
- Trinidad and Tobago contains the largest natural deposit of asphalt in the world. The Pitch Lake of La Brea, in the south of Trinidad, covers 100 acres (40 hectares), is around 250 feet (76 meters) deep, and is estimated to contain 10 million tons. Legend has it that it was "discovered" by Sir Walter Raleigh after indigenous people showed him the site. There also are natural Sulphur pools that are reputed to have healing properties.

Thank you also for remembering the university with this quarter's Thirteenth Sabbath Offering, which will help open a Better Living "center of influence" on the campus to train students to be missionaries for Jesus.

By Andrew McChesney

Gas Canister Explosion

TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO | April 24

Noelia Southwell, 35



Noelia was eager to finish cooking the Sabbath meal before sundown in Chase Village in Trinidad and Tobago.

She had worked as the main Bible worker for an evangelistic series that had resulted in 25 baptisms. Now a woman from the meetings who was thinking about baptism had invited her over for a Friday evening Bible study.

Noelia was cooking a favorite Guyanese dish, Boiled and Fried Provision, on a six-burner gas stove in her rented one-room apartment. She was waiting for the sweet potatoes, cassava, eddoes, and plantains to finish frying.

Her cell phone beeped behind her on the bed, signaling the arrival of a text message.

She turned her head around to look. Then ...

BOOM!

A loud explosion rocked the apartment.

The force of the blast threw Noelia across the room, and she landed with her back against the wall.

As she fell from the wall, an unseen hand seemed to set her down on her feet and firmly push her back across the fire-filled room and out of the front door.

Outside, Noelia screamed for help. Her words were incomprehensible, but neighbors saw the flames coming out of her apartment door. Someone called for an ambulance, and the dispatcher advised to keep dowsing Noelia with water until the ambulance arrived.

Someone began throwing water from a bucket on Noelia, and two other people tried to extinguish the fire in the apartment. Noelia was grateful for the cool water. Her head felt like it would pop off, and her skin had an unbearable burning sensation. She was suffering second-degree burns.

The ambulance whisked her to an emergency clinic that was closer to her apartment than the hospital. She needed to be stabilized.

The clinic doctor asked the paramedics what had happened.

"The gas canister exploded as she was cooking in her home," a paramedic said.

"How is she in one piece?" the doctor asked in disbelief. "She should be dead. No one lives after a gas canister explosion."

Overhearing the conversation, Noelia silently thanked God for life.

“You must have a purpose for my life,” she prayed. “That’s why You saved me.”

After she was stabilized, she was sent to the hospital. Late that night, a friend from church invited Noelia to her home.

Noelia was happy to leave the hospital, but the pain was dreadful. Church members were shocked when they heard about the explosion and saw her on Sabbath. They prayed with her and sang songs.

By Sabbath sunset, Noelia could no longer walk. Her legs had swelled up like big balloons and felt extremely heavy.

For the next month, female church members took turns staying with Noelia during the day. Pastors visited and prayed with her. Recovery was unexpectedly rapid. After a month and a half, she was able to walk again, and soon she was back to her old self. The doctor expressed surprise at how quickly her skin healed.

“You are lucky,” she said.

“I don’t believe in luck,” Noelia said. “I believe it’s a blessing from God. This is the answer to the prayers of church members.”

After the explosion, Noelia’s relationship changed with God. She had always loved Him, but now she trusted Him more. She stopped worrying about everyday problems, remembering that God had saved her for a purpose and she could trust in Him.

Nine months after the incident, the woman whom she had planned to meet on the day of the explosion gave her heart to Christ.

Today Noelia is serving God with all her heart. She helps manage an urban center of influence that reaches out to people from non-Christian religions in Trinidad and Tobago.

Story Tips

- Pronounce Noelia as: No-el-ee-a.
- Watch Noelia on YouTube: bit.ly/Noelia-Southwell.
- Download photos on Facebook (bit.ly/fb-mq).
- Download mission posts and fast facts from the Inter-American Division at: bit.ly/IAD-Facts.

Fast Facts

- Some of the best quality cocoa in the world is said to come from Trinidad and Tobago; the famous trinitario variety is the main ingredient in high-quality chocolates around the world.
- The Moruga Scorpion from southern Trinidad is officially the second-hottest pepper in the world, reaching 2 million units on the Scoville heat scale. In comparison, a bell pepper registers zero-100, and a jalapeno can reach 10,000.
- According to the United Nations, Trinidad and Tobago is the happiest country in the Caribbean.

“Nothing can keep me from doing God’s work,” Noelia said. 🌍

Part of this quarter’s Thirteenth Sabbath Offering will help open a Better Living “center of influence” on the campus to train students to be missionaries at University of the Southern Caribbean in Trinidad and Tobago. Thank you for supporting mission with your Sabbath School mission offering.

By Andrei Abramyan, as told to Andrew McChesney



It Is God

Shinell Davis, 29

My 10-year-old sister, Shakira, started complaining of back pains after slipping on wet stairs outside our home in Morveant, Trinidad and Tobago.

We thought she had pulled a muscle and gave her painkillers. The pain didn't go away after a week, so we took her to the hospital. The doctor gave her more painkillers. Shakira stopped eating, and her belly swelled up. Back at the hospital, the doctor said, "I think she has cancer."

Despite the operations, Shakira was a joyful child and tried to be the most cheerful person in the hospital room. The doctors fell in love with her. After a year she was declared cancer-free.

A few months after she returned home, the cancer returned. I spent many nights with her in the hospital. I remember her moaning, "My back, my belly, my back, my belly." She was in such pain.

The doctor arranged for an operation.

"Mommy, I don't want to do this operation," Shakira said.

"But we have to do it so you can live," Mother replied.

Shakira died a month after the surgery. I was traveling to the hospital when Mother called with the news. I wept.

Mother, however, did not cry.

"Mommy, is something wrong?" I asked at the funeral. "Why aren't you crying?"

She never answered.

Four months later, Mother's foot started to swell up. She stayed two weeks in the hospital, and the doctor diagnosed her with depression from Shakira's death. He ordered counseling, but Mother refused to go. Six months later, she died.

The loss of my mother so soon after my sister's death devastated me. But things got worse. A cousin, Mark, visited me often, trying to cheer me up and take my mind off the two tragic deaths. Six months after Mother died, he died in a car accident.

The pain inside me seemed too much to bear. My boyfriend had many tattoos on his arms, chest, back, and mouth. I knew that tattoos were painful, and I decided that a tattoo might ease my pain.

I got my nose pierced. But the pain was not enough, so I got my nose pierced again. Then I pierced my ears and got a tattoo on my chest. The pain persisted.

Then my boyfriend drowned in a swimming accident. When I got the

phone call, I couldn't believe it. I remembered my sister, my mother, and my cousin. Now my boyfriend was dead. I began to scream.

I called my workplace to say that I wouldn't be able to make it to a corporate event that evening because I had to identify my boyfriend's body at the hospital. My employer told me to wait for her nephew, Marc.

"He will pick you up," she said.

Seeing my boyfriend's body was like the end for me. I didn't see any reason to live. Four months later, I had miscarriage.

Life seemed dark, but Marc brought some light to my life. He visited me every day and shared verses from the Bible.

"Have you heard John 3:16?" he asked. "It says, 'For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have everlasting life.'"

One day Marc took me to meet his parents. His father listened to my grief and gave me his phone number.

"If you ever need someone to talk to, call me," he said. "Give yourself time. God has a purpose for you."

After that, Marc often took me to his parents. I liked them, and I was interested to hear them talk about God. One day as we were talking, I asked whether I could go to church with them.

"Yes!" the parents exclaimed.

Marc didn't say anything.

The next Sabbath, I went to church with Marc and his parents.

As we worshiped week after week, I began to feel happy again. The sermons seemed to be just for me. My pain eased. I read the Bible and the Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide every day,

Story Tips

- Ask a young woman to share this first-person account.
- Pronounce Shinell as: shin-EL
- Watch Shinell on YouTube: bit.ly/Shinell-Davis.
- Download photos on Facebook (bit.ly/fb-mq).
- Download mission posts and fast facts from the Inter-American Division at: bit.ly/IAD-Facts.

searching for answers about life.

One Sabbath, the preacher appealed for those who wished to give their hearts to Jesus in baptism to stand.

I stood immediately. I knew that I wanted to live for Jesus. Marc also stood.

Later I learned that Marc had stopped attending church five years earlier and had only returned when I had asked to go.

Marc's parents were thrilled. They had been praying for Marc to return to Jesus.

Marc and I were baptized on the same day and got married eleven months later.

Sometime people say to me, "You don't know what I am going through." Then they hear my story and say, "You went through all that? How are you still alive?" I reply, "It is God." He has given me a new life. 🌍

This quarter's Thirteenth Sabbath Offering will help open a Better Living "center of influence" to train students to be missionaries at University of the Southern Caribbean in Trinidad and Tobago.

By Shinell Davis, as told to Andrew McChesney

Deadly Scorpion Sting



COLOMBIA | May 8

Carlos Reyes, 39, and
Luz Murillo, 34

It was about 7 p.m., and Pastor Carlos and his wife, Luz, were getting ready for bed. Some might think that 7 p.m. was early for bed. But Pastor Carlos and his wife lived in the remote mountains of Colombia, working as missionaries to the Embera indigenous people. In the mountains, everyone went to bed early.

Suddenly the still of the night was shattered by loud, frantic pounding on the door of the house.

"Pastor! Pastor!" a woman cried. "Come out! Come out!"

Luz opened the door. Outside stood Cándida, a member of his congregation.

"A baby has been stung by a scorpion!" Cándida said, fright showing in her eyes.

Pastor Carlos and Luz quickly got dressed. As Pastor Carlos grabbed a flashlight, Luz, a nurse, ran to the kitchen and grabbed fresh garlic, a jar filled with drinking water, and a dropper.

Cándida led the pastor and his wife to the baby's house. The trio walked carefully in the dark night. Snakes and scorpions could be lurking in the grass.

Arriving at the baby's house, they found only the mother and her year-old baby at home. Father had left to look for the witchdoctor.

Mother was holding the baby in her arms. The baby was turning purple and shaking violently.

"I laid him in a hammock and didn't notice the scorpion," Mother explained tearfully. "Then he screamed and, when I picked him up, I saw the scorpion."

She showed the still form of a large, crushed scorpion on the floor. She had killed it with a boot.

Luz took the baby from Mother's arms and looked for the sting wound. Her forehead wrinkled with apprehension. The baby was dying.

“Let’s pray,” she said.

Mother, holding the violet, quivering baby in her arms, knelt to the floor. Pastor Carlos, Luz, and Cándida joined her, and the four held hands.

“Lord, You have the power, and You are the only one who can heal this baby,” Pastor Carlos prayed.

Luz washed the baby’s wound. She mashed the garlic and placed some on the wound. Then she mixed garlic with the drinking water from the jar and used the dropper to put drops in the baby’s mouth. After that, Pastor Carlos prayed again. He and Luz repeated the process of washing the wound, treating with garlic, and praying again and again for an hour.

Gradually, the baby’s shaking eased. His purple skin turned to a healthy pink.

“You can nurse the baby now,” Luz said, handing the baby back to Mother.

Mother held the baby close, and the boy began to nurse. The family no longer needed a witchdoctor. The God of heaven was more powerful.

Pastor Carlos prayed one last time, a joyful prayer of thanksgiving.

“Thank You, Lord, for answering our prayers for this baby,” he said. “We ask that You use this miracle to touch the hearts of this family so they understand that You truly are God.” 🌍

Part of this quarter’s Thirteenth Sabbath Offering will help open a Better Living “center of influence” at Colombia Adventist University to train students to be missionaries like Carlos. Carlos himself graduated from the university. Thank you for planning a generous Thirteenth Sabbath Offering.

By Andrew McChesney

Story Tips

- Download photos on Facebook (bit.ly/fb-mq).
- Download mission posts and fast facts from the Inter-American Division at: bit.ly/IAD-Facts.

Mission Post

- In 1894, Frank C. Kelley went from the United States to Bogota as a self-supporting missionary, paying his expenses by teaching English and selling photographic goods. He went back to the U.S. for a time, married, and then returned to Colombia, but his wife’s health required their return to the U.S. in 1899. The Kelleys returned to Colombia in December 1920, where they worked for two and a half years before permanently returning in 1923.
- In the early nineteenth century, Adventists went to the islands of San Andres and Providencia, which belong to Colombia but are located north of Panama. In 1901, S. Parker Smith (son of Uriah Smith) and his wife opened a school on San Andres. In 1908, Smith wrote in the Review and Herald that there was a church of 19 members on San Andres and a larger one on Providencia, and that Adventist work was carried largely through the school on the islands. During 1916 and 1917, several colporteurs entered mainland Colombia.
- Around 90% of Colombians are Christian, mostly Roman Catholic (71%–79%), with a significant minority of Protestants (17%). The rest of the population is atheist or agnostic or claim to believe in God but do not follow a specific religion, and a fraction of a percent adhere to non-Christian religions. More than 35% of those who claim a religion report that they do not actively practice their faith.

Lending Rice and Sugar



COLOMBIA | May 15

Maria Tordecilla, 35

Some university students seem to need more help than others. Beatrice, a mother of two, was a good example.

“Would you mind if I borrowed some rice?” Beatrice asked her landlord, Maria.

Maria, a fellow student who rented out rooms in her large house in Monetia, Colombia, gave her rice.

A few days later, Beatrice needed something else.

“May I borrow some sugar?” she asked.

Maria gave her sugar.

Then Beatrice needed bananas and more rice and sugar. Maria didn’t mind helping Beatrice. With each interaction, she prayed that she was faithfully following Christ’s method of outreach. She had read Ellen White’s description of Christ’s method in “The Ministry of Healing,” p. 143, which says, “Christ’s method alone will give true success in reaching the

people. The Saviour mingled with men as one who desired their good. He showed His sympathy for them, ministered to their needs, and won their confidence. Then He bade them, ‘Follow Me.’”

As Maria showed sympathy and ministered to Beatrice’s needs, the two women formed a warm friendship. When Maria’s church organized evangelistic meetings, she invited Beatrice to attend. Beatrice enjoyed the meetings, and the two women began to study the Bible together. After some time, Beatrice was baptized. The prayer and Bible studies continued, and Beatrice’s 12-year-old son and 8-year-old daughter were baptized. Other student tenants also joined the weekly Bible study, and the group grew to 30 people.

Then another university student came to Maria for help. He begged Maria to go with him to the university to offer moral support as he spoke with a university director. When the two arrived at the university, the director didn’t understand Maria’s presence.

“Who is this woman?” she asked the young man.

“She is the woman who leads my Bible study group,” he replied.

Surprised, the director asked for more information. Maria explained that a group of university students met once a week to study the Bible at her house and had formed a close support group.

“That’s amazing!” the director said. “There aren’t many people who give unselfish help these days.”

She asked Maria to move the Bible study to the university campus.

“After all, your participants are university students,” she said.

The university placed the group in a student study center, an open structure with only chairs and a roof. With no walls or doors on the building, other students quickly noticed the meetings, and some asked to join. The group swelled to 40 people, including three university teachers.

Among them was Rosa, a classmate of Maria who initially was reluctant to join the meetings. Maria wasn’t worried whether Rosa joined; she just wanted to be her friend. She called and texted Rosa. She invited her over to her house to eat. Rosa said she was afraid to read the Bible because she didn’t want to fail Jesus. But finally she joined the small group. As she studied the Bible and prayed, her fears disappeared and she began to believe in Jesus. After a few months, she gave her heart to Jesus and was baptized.

Maria rejoiced that Rosa had given her heart to Jesus. In the three years since the Bible study group began, Rosa was the tenth young person to have been baptized.

Maria said the reason for the Bible study group’s success is Christ’s method alone.

“I used Christ’s method to look for Rosa and to call her,” she said. “I use Christ’s method with every single young person who is in my group.” 🌱

Story Tips

- Know that Maria’s Bible study group meets at Universidad del Sinu in Moneta, Colombia.
- Download photos on Facebook (bit.ly/fb-mq).
- Download mission posts and fast facts from the Inter-American Division at: bit.ly/IAD-Facts.

Fast Facts

- Castilian Spanish is the official language in Colombia, and a lot of effort has been made to preserve its linguistic purity. There are also more than 180 indigenous languages and dialects in Colombia.
- Literacy rates in Colombia are higher than the world average; more than 94% of the people can read and write.
- Colombia is famous for two exports: It produces world-renowned coffee and is the world’s leading source of emeralds.
- Colombia was inhabited by semi-nomadic tribes until the arrival of the Spanish in the fifteenth century. It gained independence from Spain on July 20, 1810, and in 1886 the Republic of Colombia was established.

Part of this quarter’s Thirteenth Sabbath Offering will help open a Better Living “center of influence” at the Seventh-day Adventist university in Colombia, Colombia Adventist University, located about two hours by plane away from Maria’s hometown. Thank you for planning a generous Thirteenth Sabbath Offering.

By Andrew McChesney

Are You Ready to Die?



MEXICO | May 22

Roger Pech, 52

“I know that I am going to die, but I’m not ready,” José said. “I don’t think that my sins have been forgiven.”

Then he expressed gratitude to son and granddaughter for bringing him to the Adventist hospital. He thanked God for his physical and spiritual health.

“It is good that you are grateful to your family for taking good care of you,” Chaplain Roger said. “If you are thankful to your family and are sure that God is taking care of you, why haven’t you made a decision to give your heart to Jesus?”

José said he had belonged to another Christian denomination all his life. “I went to Adventist evangelistic meetings with my granddaughter, and I didn’t think that I needed to do anything more,” he said.

Chaplain Roger looked José in the eye.

“If you aren’t ready to die and you feel that your sins have not been forgiven, you need to do something more than attend evangelistic meetings,” he said. “What you’re missing is you haven’t given your life to Jesus.”

José began to think. After some time, he said, “Maybe that’s what I really need.”

“Father knows about God,” said José’s son, José Jr. “He has taken many Bible studies and attended many evangelistic meetings. All he needs to do is make a decision.”

“This is the right time to make a decision,” Chaplain Roger said. “You may

Chaplain Roger visits every patient daily at Southeast Hospital, a 40-bed Seventh-day Adventist facility in Villahermosa, Mexico.

On one particular day, Chaplain Roger stopped by the bedside of a newly admitted patient, an 80-year-old man named José. José had been hospitalized with diabetes and hypertension. He was very weak.

Chaplain Roger knew something about José. The elderly man had lived for the past twenty years with his Adventist son, who was now standing beside the hospital bed. His granddaughter worked as a nurse at the hospital. He had taken Bible studies and attended evangelistic meetings. He knew the Adventist faith but had never made a decision to give his heart to Jesus.

Chaplain Roger spoke gently but directly.

“Are you ready to die?” he asked.

“Do you feel forgiven? Are ready to go to heaven?”

not have another chance. If you make a decision, I will personally baptize you.”

That evening, José made the decision to give his life to Jesus through baptism. Chaplain Roger prayed for God to give him the physical strength to be baptized.

The next day Chaplain Roger visited José in his room. He felt much better but still wanted to be baptized. Chaplain Roger filled out a baptismal form and asked whether José would give his word of honor to make good on his promise.

“Definitely, yes,” José said.

He was baptized about a week after his release from the hospital.

José was very happy on the day of his baptism. Shaking the chaplain’s hand, he said, “I have kept my word.”

After that, José faithfully attended church every Sabbath. He died three years later, in 2019, at the age of 83.

José is one of many hospital patients whom Chaplain Roger has seen transformed by the power of Jesus’ love. He is not usually as direct with patients as he was with José. But he knew that José had a good knowledge of God and felt impressed to be more direct with him. He follows Christ’s method of reaching out to people, which Ellen White describes in “The Ministry of Healing,” p. 143. She says, “Christ’s method alone will give true success in reaching the people. The Saviour mingled with men as one who desired their good. He showed His sympathy for them, ministered to their needs, and won their confidence. Then He bade them, ‘Follow Me.’”

Chaplain Roger said hospital chaplains aren’t the only people surrounded by the sick. The world is filled with people sick with sin. The best thing to do, at first, is to show sympathy by listening, he said.

Story Tips

- Watch Chaplain Roger on YouTube: bit.ly/Roger-Pech.
- Download photos on Facebook (bit.ly/fb-mq).
- Download mission posts and fast facts from the Inter-American Division at: bit.ly/IAD-Facts.

Mission Post

- The earliest Seventh-day Adventist missionary work in Mexico dates to 1891, when an American tailor, S. Marchisio, went to Mexico City to sell the English edition of “The Great Controversy.” Two years later, in 1893, a group of missionaries, including Dan T. Jones, Dr. Lillis Wood, Ida Crawford, Ora Osborne, and Alfred Cooper and his wife, arrived at Guadalajara and helped open a medical mission and a school. Later, the clinic developed into the Guadalajara Sanitarium. The Review and Herald (July 10, 1894) reported this venture as the first Adventist attempt at medical missionary work outside of the United States.

“Once a patient has emptied the weight that he or she is carrying inside, the patient finds it easier to listen to and accept advice,” he said. “Then you can talk about Jesus.” 🌐

Part of a 2018 Thirteenth Sabbath Offering helped build a new wing at Southeast Hospital in Villahermosa, Mexico. Thank you for your offering that allows more patients to hear about Jesus’ love from Chaplain Roger and his seven-member team of volunteers.

By Andrew McChesney



Boom!

Ángel Haro, 43

With binoculars, 21-year-old Ángel scanned a barren landscape of sand, cacti, and shrubs in Mexico's Chihuahua State.

BOOM!

Ángel saw soldiers fire heavy artillery. Even though the soldiers and their artillery were four miles (7 km) away, the explosion rang loudly across the desert. Ángel followed the billowing trail of white smoke that showed the shell's flight path.

"God," he prayed silently, "please make it explode."

Moments later, BOOM! The shell exploded in a ball of fire and smoke as it struck the ground, destroying everything within a half-mile (1-km) radius.

Ángel breathed a sigh of relief. The two soldiers watching beside him also were relieved. Their job was to make sure that every shell detonated. No unexploded shells could be left on the firing range when their military unit of 60 soldiers returned to its base in Mexico City at the end of the 15-day exercise.

This was the last day of the exercise. The next morning, the soldiers would board a military train for the seven-day trip back to the base. Ángel was happy at the thought of returning to the base. He would get permission to visit his mother. He remembered the Bible that his mother had given him. He read stories about Jesus every night after military exercises. He knew that his mother had been praying for him since she had joined the Seventh-day Adventist Church five years earlier. Now he prayed as he watched shells being fired.

BOOM!

More white smoke arched across the sky.

"God, please make it explode,"

Ángel prayed again.

Silence.

Ángel's brow wrinkled with worry. His two companions cursed angrily. The trio would have to track down the unexploded shell and destroy it.

Two hours later, the day's exercises ended. Ángel and his two companions set out to search for the unexploded 33-pound (15-kg) metal shell.

Walking in the blast zone, Ángel saw rabbits and coyotes killed by the explosions of other shells.

"Here it is," a soldier suddenly called out. "It's buried in soft sand."

The soldiers built a mound of dry brush and sticks over the shell. One soldier poured diesel on the wood and struck a match as Ángel and the other soldier fled to the shelter of a heap of rocks about half a mile (one kilometer) away. A short time later, the third soldier joined them.

Then they waited. Five minutes ... ten minutes ... fifteen minutes passed.

“God, please make it explode,” Ángel prayed.

Twenty minutes ... BOOM!

The soldiers peered around the rock pile. Thick white smoke filled the air. When the smoke dissipated ten minutes later, the soldiers walked to the blast site to put out a small fire caused by the shell. They were smiling and laughing, knowing that their delicate mission had been successful and soon they would be on their way home.

BOOM!

Immediately Ángel threw himself to the ground. He had never felt so scared in his life.

“God, please protect us. Protect us,” he prayed. “Keep us safe. Keep us safe.”

It was unexplainable. The unimaginable had happened. The shell had exploded a second time.

After a few minutes, the soldiers stood up and checked themselves. No one even had a scratch. They had stood only seven yards (meters) from the shell when it exploded. The soldiers threw their arms around each other in a joyful embrace. Then they knelt reverently in the sand.

“Thank You, God, for Your protection and for keeping us safe,” Ángel repeated over and over.

That day changed Ángel's life. He began to listen when his mother spoke about Jesus. He carefully read Bible studies and Ellen White books that his mother

Story Tips

- Watch Ángel on YouTube: bit.ly/Angel-Haro.
- Download photos on Facebook (bit.ly/fb-mq).
- Download mission posts and fast facts from the Inter-American Division at: bit.ly/IAD-Facts.

Mission Post

- Catholicism has been the dominant Mexican religion since it was introduced during the Spanish colonization of the sixteenth century, and Mexico is the second-largest Catholic country in the world after Brazil.
- According to the latest national census, 83% of the population of Mexico is Roman Catholic, with 10% other Christians, 0.2% other religions, 5% no religion, and 3% non-specified.

mailed to the military base. Two years after the explosion, he gave his heart to Jesus and was baptized.

“Only a miracle saved us that day,” Ángel said. “Usually shells do not explode twice. It was definitely God's hand that protected us. I am convinced that God had a plan for me.” 🌍

Today Ángel is 43 and works as chief safety and quality control officer at Southeast Hospital, a Seventh-day Adventist facility in Villahermosa, Mexico. Thank you for your Thirteenth Sabbath Offering in first quarter 2018 that helped the hospital expand with a new wing.

By Andrew McChesney

Praying for a Husband



MEXICO | June 5

Esther Garcia, 35

When Esther was 12, she began to pray in a special way every night in her bedroom in Villahermosa, Mexico.

“Please find me a good husband,” she prayed.

Esther’s father drank heavily and fought with her mother constantly. He often threatened Esther and Mother with a kitchen knife, and he sometimes threw it at them. He always missed.

Esther actually didn’t know how to pray, but she believed God could help her. She spoke to Him as she would a friend.

“Please give me a good husband, a happy family, and a baby,” she prayed.

After graduating from the university, she met Luis while working at a drugstore. He was her boss. The two began dating, and Luis invited her to a special Sabbath program at the Seventh-day Adventist church.

She immediately liked the church.

The people were friendly, and she felt a peace that she had never experienced before. She listened as the preacher spoke about Daniel.

Suddenly she heard a male voice speaking to her.

“This is your place,” the voice said. “You belong here.”

Esther looked at Luis.

“Are you talking to me?” she asked.

“I’m not talking to you,” he said. “I’m sitting here quietly.”

Esther wondered whether she was losing my mind.

As she left the church after the sermon, the voice continued speaking in her mind.

“This is your place,” the voice said. “You belong here.”

Esther didn’t understand who was speaking. But she felt peace.

The next Sabbath, Esther announced to Luis that she wanted to take Bible studies.

The next day, Luis’ sister and her husband gladly came to Esther’s house to study the Bible with her. As Esther learned about Creation and the Ten Commandments, a desire grew in her heart to know even more. She began to

study the Bible on her own.

One Sunday afternoon, Father arrived home heavily drunk as Esther was in the middle of a Bible study. He saw the married Adventist couple in the living room and headed straight for the kitchen. Esther heard crashing and banging in the kitchen, and then Father called her to come to him. In the kitchen, Father raised the kitchen knife menacingly. “Leave my house with your friends,” he snarled. “If you don’t leave, I will kill you.”

Esther’s eyes widened. The voice was not her father’s. His face wore an expression that she had never seen before. He looked like a different person. She tried to reason with him.

“Please calm down,” she said. “I don’t use drugs, and I don’t drink alcohol. I am trying to study the Bible, which is good for my life.”

Father refused to listen.

“I’m going to kill those people, and I’m going to kill you,” he growled.

Esther asked her church friends to leave. After praying with her, the couple left. Esther went to her room and wept.

“Please, God, You have to help me,” she said. “I don’t want to live like this.”

She felt peace. Leaving her room, she found Father in the living room. When he saw her, he started laughing loudly. Esther sensed that it wasn’t Father laughing. She ran back to room and prayed again.

“God, what do you want from me?” she said.

She sensed the answer immediately. At that moment, she decided to give her heart to Jesus and be baptized.

Today, eight years later, Esther serves as church secretary and youth director at Amatitan Seventh-day Adventist Church

Story Tips

- Watch Esther on YouTube: bit.ly/Esther-Garcia.
- Download photos on Facebook (bit.ly/fb-mq).
- Download mission posts and fast facts from the Inter-American Division at: bit.ly/IAD-Facts.

Fast Facts

- Mexicans take their sports seriously. In pre-conquest times, losers of a ritual ball game were often put to death. There are still dangerous sports, like bullfighting and rodeo (invented in Mexico), where competitors risk their lives.
- Mexico has produced great artists throughout its history, including the Maya and other indigenous groups, who made murals, sculptures, and jewelry. Modern Mexican artists, too, produce great paintings, sculptures, murals, and photographs.
- Mexico is one of the world’s more biologically diverse countries; made up of mountains and tropical rainforests, deserts and swamps, it supports myriad types of animals.

in Villahermosa, Mexico. She also is married to Luis, and they are expecting their first baby. “I prayed for a good husband, a happy family, and a baby,” she said. “God has answered my prayers.” 🌎

Thank you for your Thirteenth Sabbath Offering in first quarter 2018 that helped construct a new wing at Southeast Hospital, a Seventh-day Adventist facility in Esther’s hometown, Villahermosa, Mexico.

By Andrew McChesney



Not My Way

Fabiola Padilla, 36

After being baptized, Fabiola prayed for eighteen years for her father also to give his heart to Jesus in Villahermosa, Mexico.

His case seemed hopeless.

He didn't believe in the Bible and prayed to Mary and the saints. A heavy drinker, he frequently scorned and insulted his wife, and his face was perpetually twisted in anger.

Fabiola spoke about Jesus, but Father usually walked away. She didn't grow weary of praying. She also asked church members to pray.

God finally answered her prayers. But the answer wasn't what she expected.

At the age of 75, Father was diagnosed with liver cancer. The physician said the cancer had spread too far and was inoperable. When Fabiola heard that Father would die, she started praying even more earnestly for his salvation.

"Lord, give me the right words so I can tell Father about you," she prayed every

morning and evening for a week.

"Give me courage," she prayed.

Then she went to Father's bedside and grasped his hand. She was nervous. She feared that he would snap at her and tell her to leave. But she remembered that she had prayed.

"I love you so much," she said. "The God about whom I'm going to talk this morning is the God in whom you believe. He is the God who has the power to heal you. Let me pray with you."

To her surprise, Father allowed her to pray with him.

From that day, she and Father prayed together every morning and evening. After praying, she read from the Bible and sang hymns. Father listened quietly.

Fabiola wondered whether her actions were useless, but she kept reading the Bible and singing. She and other church members set aside a day of prayer and fasting for Father.

The cancer spread rapidly, and Father grew weak. Fabiola didn't know what to do. An Adventist friend, Rita, offered to give Bible studies to Father. To Fabiola's surprise, Father agreed to take the Bible studies.

Seeing Father's deteriorating condition, Rita accelerated the Bible studies, doing seven lessons in a week. After the seventh lesson, Rita asked Father whether he wanted to give his heart to Jesus.

"Why don't you get baptized?" she said.

Father announced that he wanted to be baptized.

Roger Pech, the chaplain from the Adventist Church's Southeast Hospital, baptized Father in a plastic children's pool in the yard outside the family house at 1:30 p.m. on a Wednesday.

That evening, Father didn't want to go to the bedroom. He wanted to stay with his family in the living room.

Shortly after midnight, he started to breath faster. Then he took a last breath and closed his eyes.

Father's face, twisted in anger in life, looked uncharacteristically peaceful in the coffin. Astonished mourners asked whether he had gone to church without their knowledge. Fabiola said he had given his heart to Jesus hours before he died.

Fabiola is convinced that God performed a miracle. Father's change of heart took place over a period of only two months, from the time that he was diagnosed with cancer and he died.

"Father gave his heart to Jesus, not the way that I wanted but in God's way," Fabiola said. "What is impossible for man is possible for God." 🌍

Thank you for your Thirteenth Sabbath Offering in first quarter 2018 that helped construct a new wing at Southeast Hospital, the Seventh-day Adventist facility where Chaplain Roger Pech works, in Villahermosa, Mexico.

By Andrew McChesney

Story Tips

- Watch Fabiola and her father on YouTube: bit.ly/Fabiola-Padilla.
- Download photos on Facebook (bit.ly/fb-mq).
- Download mission posts and fast facts from the Inter-American Division at: bit.ly/IAD-Facts.

Fast Facts

- Mexico has a rich indigenous heritage and was deeply affected by several centuries of rule by the Spanish. Today, most Mexicans are mestizos, a mix of indigenous and Spanish blood.
- Mexico's first sophisticated society was created by the Olmec people, who appeared in the southeastern part of the country around 1200 B.C. They were followed by the Maya, the Toltec, and the Aztec peoples.
- From birth to death, an individual's status and opportunities in Mexico are strongly influenced by family ties. Due to the economic advantage, or necessity, of sharing accommodation, three or more generations often share a household, in both rural and urban areas. Whole families, grandparents, adults, teenagers, and small children commonly attend events together.
- Weddings are usually grand, family-oriented events, as is the traditional quinceañera, celebrating a young woman's fifteenth birthday.
- Mexican food is known for its range of flavors and spices, particularly hot chilies. Popular dishes include tacos, burritos, and enchiladas, which can be found in restaurants around the world.
- Gray whales swim thousands of miles each year from Alaska to northern Mexico, to breed in the waters off Baja California.

Power of a Seed



MEXICO | June 19

Florencio Vazquez, 61

Four-year-old Florencio worked hard on Grandmother's farm in Mexico. He planted and tended crops of rice, avocado, cacao, and roses with the help of two adult cousins and a 7-year-old neighbor boy, Antonio.

Florencio noticed that Antonio didn't work on Saturdays. Antonio also didn't collect his salary with the two adult cousins every Saturday afternoon. He only came after dark on Saturday evening.

Florencio asked why.

"I've read the Bible," Antonio replied. "God says that we shouldn't work on Saturday because that is His day."

Florencio believed Antonio because the boy wasn't like other boys. He was polite, kind, and read the Bible. He was his best friend.

A few days later, during a break from work, Antonio invited Florencio to go with him to church.

"Would you like to come to church?" he asked while the two boys sipped *pozol*, a sweet purple corn drink. "We have a special program for children. We can read the Bible together. You can make new friends."

"Yes, I want to go," Florencio said.

But he didn't go. Grandmother belonged to another Christian denomination, and she didn't like Seventh-day Adventists. She thought they were lazy because they didn't work on Saturdays.

But Antonio didn't give up. He invited Florencio again a few days later.

"Come to church with me," he said.

Florencio wanted to go, but Grandmother refused to allow him to go.

Antonio continued to invite Florencio regularly, and after a month Florencio saw an opportunity. One Saturday morning, Grandmother left the house early to sell avocados and roses. He went with Antonio to church — and he liked it. The people were friendly. He especially enjoyed the children's Sabbath School program.

When he returned home, Grandmother was waiting for him.

"Where were you?" she demanded.

“I went with Antonio to the Adventist church,” the small boy said.

Grandmother was furious.

“I don’t like that church. Don’t go to that church,” she said. “I’ll buy beer for you if you don’t go to that church.”

But Florencio kept going to church with his friend on Saturdays. He slipped out of the house after Grandmother had left to sell farm produce, and he made sure to return before her.

Two years passed, and Antonio moved with his family to a different town.

Without his friend, Florencio stopped going to church, and he picked up unhealthy habits. By the age of 9, he was drinking beer heavily with his grandmother’s approval. Then he started smoking marijuana and using cocaine.

But the seed that Antonio had planted while working on Grandmother’s farm did not die.

After struggling with addictions for many years, Florencio cried out to God for help. “Please heal me,” he prayed.

He prayed the same prayer for a year and, suddenly, the desire to drink, smoke, and use drugs left him. He was free at the age of 45, and he rejoiced, knowing that God had answered his prayers. He gave his heart to Jesus and joined the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

Florencio said he became an Adventist because he remembered what Antonio had told him when he was 4 years old: that the Adventist Church follows the Bible and keeps all of God’s laws, including the seventh-day Sabbath.

Today Florencio is 61 and loves to talk about how God saved him from a life of alcohol and drugs. About twenty people have given their hearts to Jesus after

Story Tips

- Watch Florencio on YouTube: bit.ly/Florencio-Vazquez.
- Download photos on Facebook (bit.ly/fb-mq).
- Download mission posts and fast facts from the Inter-American Division at: bit.ly/IAD-Facts.

Mission Post

- The most popular sport in Mexico is soccer. Mexico hosted the Football World Cup in 1970 and 1986, and Mexico City hosted the Summer Olympic Games in 1968.
- More than half of population of Mexico lives in the center of the country, but vast arid areas in the north and the tropical south are only thinly settled. Nearly 80% of Mexicans now live in urban areas as people from impoverished rural areas have streamed into Mexico’s cities, and Mexico City, the capital, is one of the highest density cities in the world.

hearing his personal testimony and taking Bible studies with him.

“We have a powerful God,” Florencio said. “I cannot explain His power, but it has changed my life.” 🌐

Thank you for your Thirteenth Sabbath Offering in first quarter 2018 that helped construct a new wing at Southeast Hospital, the Seventh-day Adventist facility in Florencio’s hometown of Villahermosa, Mexico.

By Andrew McChesney

Door to Door



13th SABBATH | June 26

Ashley Alvarez, 20

It all started when I entered high school in a small Mexican town located about a two-hour drive south of the border from the U.S. state of Texas.

A classmate, Ketzy, and I became good friends, and I learned that she was a Seventh-day Adventist. She repeatedly invited me to go with her on campouts and other church activities. But I refused all through high school.

"I can't go," I said. "My parents haven't given permission."

But I never asked my parents for permission. I wasn't interested in going, and her invitations went in one ear and out the other.

Sometimes Ketzy and I had friendly debates about the Sabbath. She told me what she believed, and I told her what I believed. But I actually didn't know what

I believed. I was just trying to be contrary. Anyway, my father told me that the day of worship didn't matter.

After we graduated from high school, Ketzy decided to study medicine, but my university application was rejected. I began to think that God had forgotten me. I felt sad for a year and, when Ketzy invited me to a campout, I agreed to go.

I immediately liked the campout. The campers were nice and welcoming.

The three-day campout focused on mission work. We cleaned a river and renovated an Adventist church. Going door to door impressed me the most. People's faces shone after we sang a song or read a Bible verse. I could see that their hearts were transformed by our prayers.

I had never engaged in mission work before, and I was surprised by how good I felt. I thought, "I really want to do more of this. I must do this all the time!"

The weekend campout changed my life. All my sadness vanished. I felt like my life had a purpose.

But I didn't know what the purpose was. I told my parents about the campout, but they didn't show any interest.

The next Sabbath, I went to church. People welcomed me and involved me in church activities. I learned a lot as I

read the Bible and went to church every Sabbath after that.

Exactly one month after the campout, a Montemorelos University theology student visited the church for a week of evangelistic meetings. I invited him home for dinner, and he spoke with my family about the Bible. As he prepared to leave, he asked me, “Have you thought about baptism?”

When I heard the question, I thought, “Oh, wow, I wanted to hear that!”

Immediately I decided to be baptized. My parents and Ketzy watched as I was baptized three days later.

A month passed, and I attended a Pathfinder camporee at Montemorelos University. During testimony time, organizers called me to the stage to tell my story. People were visibly moved as I spoke. When I finished, an organizer announced, “And she wants to be a student at Montemorelos.”

Actually, I didn’t want to study at the university. I didn’t have the money and, besides, I wanted to stay with my parents. But I couldn’t refuse the suggestion of a university teacher to spend the summer working as a literature evangelist to earn tuition money. As I went door to door near the university, I learned much more about my faith. I realized that my wish from the youth campout to go door to door had come true. I fell in love with literature evangelism.

When the summer ended, my parents ordered me to return home. At home, I longed to go back to the university to continue earning tuition money as a literature evangelist. I realize now that God was impressing me to work as a literature evangelist.

Story Tips

- Ask a young woman to share this first-person account.
- Watch Ashley on YouTube: bit.ly/Ashley-Alvarez.
- Download photos on Facebook (bit.ly/fb-mq).
- Download mission posts and fast facts from the Inter-American Division at: bit.ly/IAD-Facts.

Fast Facts

- Spanish is the official national language of Mexico and is spoken by the majority of the population, but there are about 60 indigenous languages still spoken, including Huastec in Veracruz; Maya in the Yucatán; Mazahua, Nahuatl, Otomí, Tarastec, and Totonac in the Mesa Central region; Tzeltal and Tzotzil in Chiapas; and Zapotec, Mixtec, and Mazatec in Oaxaca.
- Mexico is a central component in the migratory patterns of many species. Innumerable ducks and geese fly every autumn into the mountains of Mexico. Millions of endangered monarch butterflies migrate each year from the United States to spend the winter on the forested peaks in eastern Michoacán state. Michoacán’s Monarch Butterfly Biosphere Reserve was designated a UNESCO World Heritage site in 2008, although pollution from Mexico City and logging activities threaten the butterflies and their roosting trees.
- The three colors of Mexico’s flag hold deep significance for the country: Green stands for hope and victory; white means purity; and red represents the blood shed by the nation’s heroes.

Finally, I told my parents that if they didn't take me back to the university, I would go on my own. My parents angrily drove me back. They didn't say even goodbye when they dropped me off. It was hard for me, and I prayed, "Lord, it is just You and me."

A month passed with no communication with my parents, and I wondered whether I had made a mistake. I called my father. Just as I was about to tell him that I wanted to return home, he said, "You can't come back. Stay there. Your Mother and I are joining the Adventist Church."

I couldn't believe it. I started crying. I couldn't talk because I was crying so hard.

Later I learned that my parents had been astounded by my determination to serve God as a literature evangelist. After dropping me off at the university, they had decided to go to the Adventist church to learn more. Then they took Bible studies and decided to be baptized. All that time, I thought that they were angry with me.

Six weeks after the phone call, Father and Mother were baptized together with

my 17-year-old brother and 13-year-old sister. Because I was faithful to God's call to work as a literature evangelist, my family was baptized.

My hometown, San Fernando, is small, and everyone knows that my family has joined the Adventist Church. As my parents and I share our story, many families are showing an interest in the church. I don't know what will happen next. This is just the beginning of our story. 🌍

This quarter's Thirteenth Sabbath Offering will help open "Better Living" missionary training centers at Montemorelos University and at twelve Seventh-day Adventist institutions of higher education in the Inter-American Division. Thank you for your generous Thirteenth Sabbath Offering that helps spread the gospel around the world.

By Ashley Alvarez, as told to Andrew McChesney

Offering

Future Thirteenth Sabbath Projects

The Thirteenth Sabbath Offering next quarter will help the North American Division to:

- Complete second phase of multifunctional gym, Holbrook SDA Indian School, USA
- Construct staff housing, Palau SDA School, Palau
- Build church and community center, Igloolik, Canada
- Plant churches for refugees, Canada and USA

Leader's Resources

Be sure to download your free Mission Spotlight video, featuring video reports from around the Inter-American Division and beyond. Download or stream from the Adventist Mission website at bit.ly/missionspotlight.

Online Information

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:

Websites

Colombia: government website	bit.ly/ColGovt
CIA World Factbook	bit.ly/CIAWFBCol
Colombia Travel	bit.ly/ColTrav
Mexico: government website	bit.ly/MexGovt
Lonely Planet	bit.ly/LonPlanMex
Visit Mexico	bit.ly/Visit_Mex

Trinidad and Tobago: government website	bit.ly/TandTGovt
US News & World Report	bit.ly/USNWRTT
Trip Savvy	bit.ly/TripSavTT

Seventh-day Adventist

Inter-American Division	bit.ly/SDA_IAD
North Colombian Union Conference	bit.ly/SDA_NCUC
South Colombian Union Conference	bit.ly/SDA_SCUC
Central Mexican Union Mission	bit.ly/SDA_CMUM
Chiapas Mexican Union Conference	bit.ly/SDA_CMUC
Inter-Oceanic Mexican Union Conference	bit.ly/SDA_IOMUC
North Mexican Union Conference	bit.ly/SDA_NMUC
Southeast Mexican Union Mission	bit.ly/SDA_SMUM
Caribbean Union Conference	bit.ly/SDA_CUC
South Caribbean Conference	bit.ly/SDA_SCC
Tobago Mission	bit.ly/36GkO6j

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 Inter-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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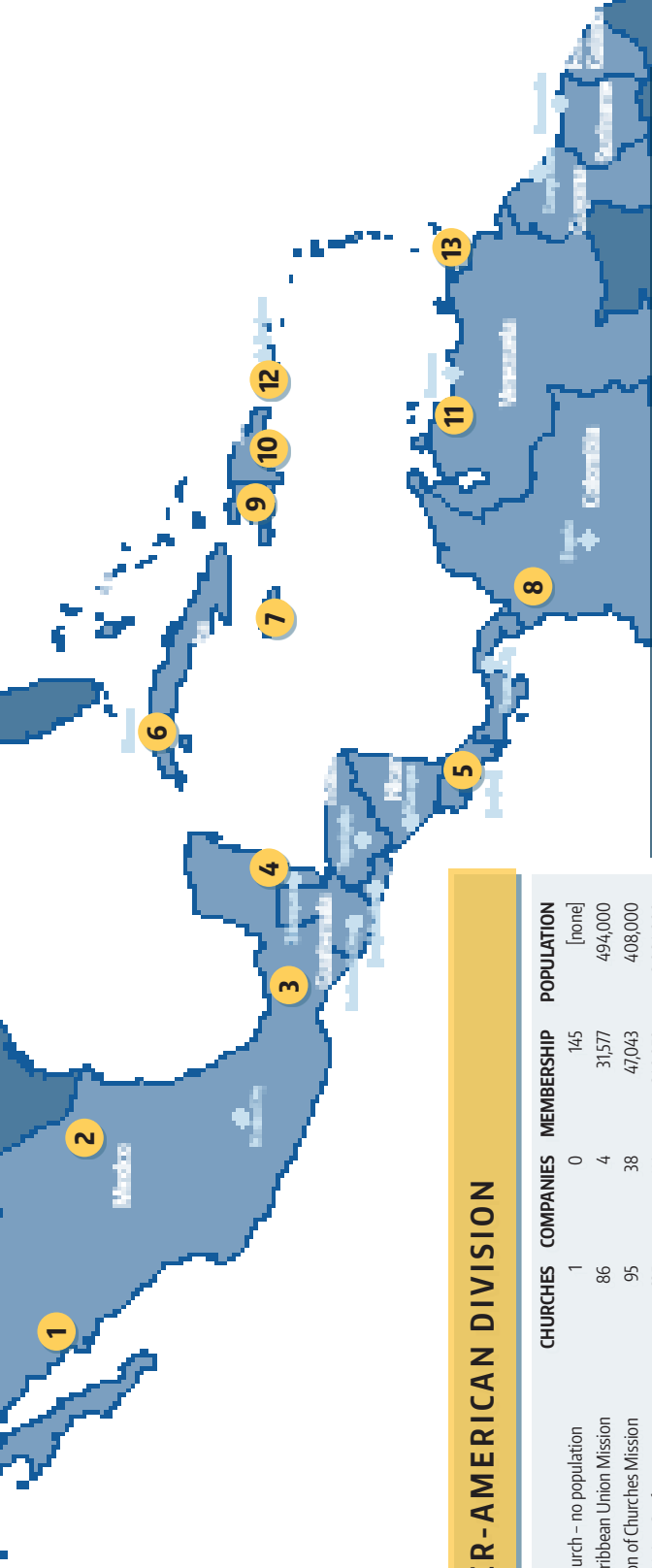
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INTER-AMERICAN DIVISION

UNION	CHURCHES	COMPANIES	MEMBERSHIP	POPULATION
Division Church – no population	1	0	145	[none]
Atlantic Caribbean Union Mission	86	4	31,577	494,000
Belize Union of Churches Mission	95	38	47,043	408,000
Caribbean Union Conference	635	114	248,979	3,864,000
Central Mexican Union Mission	250	151	87,829	45,609,047
Chiapas Mexican Union Conference	1,340	1,838	252,071	6,609,679
Cuban Union Conference	343	146	36,973	11,212,000
Dominican Union Conference	929	444	353,763	10,400,000
Dutch Caribbean Union Mission	37	6	9,798	285,000
East Venezuela Union Mission	593	270	183,451	13,881,589
El Salvador Union Mission	796	204	195,792	6,454,000
French Antilles-Guiana Union Conference	143	24	29,438	1,093,000
Guatemala Union Mission	1,017	273	236,216	17,581,000
Haitian Union Mission	612	512	480,496	11,263,000
Honduras Union Mission	471	227	102,008	9,746,000
Inter-Oceanic Mexican Union Conference	1,760	1,392	204,506	26,188,376
Jamaica Union Conference	696	35	319,066	2,811,000
North Colombian Union Conference	1,002	573	127,840	21,751,493
North Mexican Union Conference	688	411	156,197	40,995,962
Panama Union Mission	371	232	91,374	4,219,000
Puerto Rican Union Conference	312	8	33,303	3,059,000
South Central American Union Mission	528	325	116,481	11,606,000
South Colombian Union Conference	756	316	158,291	28,622,507
Southeast Mexican Union Mission	588	588	77,717	7,173,935
West Venezuela Union Mission	659	262	173,834	14,634,411
DIVISION TOTALS	14,708	8,393	3,754,188	299,962,000

PROJECTS

Open 13 Better Living centers of influence, one at each of the following:

- 1 Navajo University (North Mexican Union), Mexico
- 2 Montemorelos University (North Mexican Union), Mexico
- 3 Linda Vista University (Southeast Mexican Union), Mexico
- 4 Belize Adventist Junior College (Belize Union), Belize
- 5 Central America Adventist University (South Central American Union), Costa Rica
- 6 Cuba Adventist Theological Seminary (Cuban Union), Cuba
- 7 Northern Caribbean University (Jamaica Union), Jamaica
- 8 Colombia Adventist University (North Colombian Union), Colombia
- 9 Haitian Adventist University Academy (Haitian Union), Haiti
- 10 Dominican Adventist University (Dominican Union), Dominican Republic
- 11 Adventist University Institute of Venezuela (West Venezuela Union), Venezuela
- 12 Antillean Adventist University (Puerto Rican Union), Puerto Rico
- 13 University of the Southern Caribbean (Caribbean Union), Trinidad