



YOUTH & ADULT MISSION


2020 • **QUARTER 1** • INTER-EUROPEAN DIVISION





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 = stories of special interest to teens

Your Offerings at Work



A Thirteenth Sabbath Offering collected three years ago helped construct a Seventh-day Adventist church in Ragusa, Italy. Read a story from Ragusa on page 12.



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Dear Sabbath School Leader,

Andrew McChesney
Editor



This quarter we feature the Inter-European Division, which oversees the Seventh-day Adventist Church's work in 20 countries and territories: Andorra, Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, France, Germany, Gibraltar, Italy, Liechtenstein, Luxembourg, Malta, Monaco, Portugal, Romania, San Marino, Slovakia, Spain, Switzerland, and Vatican City.

The region is home to 338.1 million people, including 178,453 Adventists. That's a ratio of one Adventist for 1,895 people.

God is doing great things in this region. As I traveled across Europe to conduct interviews, I heard astounding stories about angels, dreams, miracles, and more. Every supernatural encounter led to the same result — one or more individuals being drawn to Jesus. I am excited to share these stories with you!

The four Thirteenth Sabbath projects for this quarter are listed below.

Special Features

If you want to make your Sabbath School class come alive, we offer a variety of photos, videos, and other materials to accompany each mission story. More information is provided in the sidebar with each story. Download a PDF of facts and activities at bit.ly/EUD-fastfacts-2020.

Also, follow us on Facebook at facebook.com/missionquarterlies for regular updates.

For photos of tourist sites and other scenes from the featured countries, I recommend searching on a free photo bank such as pixabay.com and unsplash.com.

You also 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.

If you have found especially effective ways to share mission stories, or if I can be of assistance, contact me at mcchesneya@gc.adventist.org.

Finally, your support for mission is essential for church unity. Ellen White writes in "Christian Service," p. 47, "Never can the unity for which Christ prayed exist until spirituality is brought into missionary service, and until the church becomes an agency for the support of missions. The efforts of the missionaries will not accomplish what they should until the church members in the home field show, not only in word, but in deed, that they realize the obligation resting on them to give these missionaries their hearty support."

Thank you for encouraging church members to be mission-minded!

Opportunities

The Thirteenth Sabbath Offering this quarter will help to:

- Expand Sagunto Adventist College with a new seminary building in Spain
- Renovate the landmark main building at Marienhöhe Academy in Darmstadt, Germany
- Establish an educational outreach program for vulnerable children in the Czech Republic and Slovakia
- Build a church with a children's center in Sofia, Bulgaria



New Year's Miracle

Maria Bachvarova, 73

Three elderly women decided to pray for unbelieving relatives on Bulgaria's biggest holiday, New Year's Eve.

The trio, members of Sofia West Seventh-day Adventist Church, would pray at 11:30 p.m. and then again at 12:15 a.m. in their homes in Bulgaria's capital.

On Dec. 31, when the appointed time arrived, Maria Bachvarova left her husband and adult son at their New Year's Eve celebration and slipped into another room. She prayed that both would accept Jesus. Then she remembered her younger brother, Nikolai. She had invited Nikolai, 66, to attend the New Year's celebration in her home, but he hadn't shown up.

Nikolai was gentle, diligent, and honest, but he had suffered a series of misfortunes. Once a well-paid business executive, he had gone bankrupt, and his wife had left him. Nearly penniless, he worked as a security guard at a construction site.

Maria prayed for Nikolai for 25 minutes, returned to the family celebration for 20 minutes, and then

prayed for her brother again. Nikolai didn't show up that night.

But he did come the next day, and he had quite a story to share.

The previous night, he was supposed to keep the night watch at a construction site. But when he arrived, the other guard sent him away, saying that he was waiting for his wife and the couple wanted to celebrate the New Year together at the site.

Nikolai decided to go to his sister, and he went to the nearby tram stop. It was 10:30 p.m. He waited two hours for a tram, but none came.

Suddenly, a window opened in a newly constructed apartment building behind the tram stop, and a man and woman appeared. They invited Nikolai home.

Nikolai entered a well-furnished apartment, and he sat in a comfortable armchair. Later he ate a delicious meal, and his hosts played Macedonian music, which happened to be his favorite. As a business executive, he had developed a taste for fine things, and now he enjoyed his old way of life. In the morning, his hosts woke him up and told him that a taxi was waiting outside. They had already paid the fare. Saying good-bye, they gave him a banknote of 50 Bulgarian lev, about U.S.\$30. Nikolai had been flat broke.

Maria wept when Nikolai finished.

Story Tips

- Ask church members to share the names of unbelieving family members and then pray for them by name.
- Watch Maria on YouTube: bit.ly/Maria-Bachvarova.
- Download photos on Facebook (bit.ly/fb-mq) or ADAMS databank (bit.ly/new-years-miracle).
- Download photos of Thirteenth Sabbath projects: bit.ly/eud-2020-projects.

“God took care of you last night,” she said.

She went into another room and returned with a Bible and an Adventist book to present to the couple as a gift. “Tell them ‘thank you’ from me,” she said.

Several days later, Nikolai gave the Bible and the book back to Maria.

“It is the strangest thing,” he said. “I went back to the apartment building and found that it is unfinished. No one lives there yet.”

The apartment building was vacant. At that moment, Maria understood that God had sent angels to care for her lonely brother on New Year’s Eve. God had answered her prayers for Nikolai.

After that miracle in 2012, Nikolai started to go to church with his sister on Sabbaths. God hears us when we pray for unbelieving loved ones. As with Maria and Nikolai, He can answer in remarkable ways. 🌐

Part of this quarter’s Thirteenth Sabbath Offering will help Maria’s church, the Sofia West Seventh-day Adventist Church, move from rented premises to its own building.

By Andrew McChesney

Guns and Books

Maria Bachvarova and a friend decided to go door to door selling Adventist books in a new apartment high-rise in Sofia.

The two women started at the ground floor and worked their way up, stopping at every door. Many never opened. Some were slammed shut in their faces.

On a higher floor, Maria and her friend exited the elevator and saw six apartment doors. As they paused to choose a door, all six doors flew open. Six huge men wearing black suits, white shirts, and black ties stepped out, pointing guns.

“We’re offering books,” Maria stammered.

The men roughly pushed the women back into the elevator. “Leave,” one said.

In her fright, Maria pressed the wrong button. Instead of the bottom button to go down, she pressed the top button. When the elevator doors opened, the women saw only one door. Although scared, the women felt a strong urge to go to the door of the penthouse apartment. They prayed and pressed the doorbell.

An elegant-looking woman answered.

“Who are you looking for?” she asked.

“We have some interesting books to show you,” Maria said.

The woman glanced at Ellen White’s “Conflict of the Ages” series and other books and declared, “I’ll buy them all.”

Later Maria learned that the floor where they had been greeted by guns was owned by a mafia boss. The huge men with guns were his bodyguards. The man was killed shortly afterward. Maria was never able to enter the building again.

“I’m grateful to God that we were able to share those books with the woman on the top floor,” she said.



Miracle Church

Stoyan Petkov, 48

Pastor Stoyan Petkov prayed for two years for a new church building in Sofia, Bulgaria.

Unbeknownst to him, as he prayed world church leaders in the United States decided to give part of the Thirteenth Sabbath Offering from first quarter 2020 to build a new church for his congregation.

Stoyan didn't know that God had answered his prayers until the Thirteenth Sabbath project had been approved.

Here's what happened.

Stoyan became the pastor of the Sofia West Seventh-day Adventist Church in 2015. At the time, the congregation met on the premises of an evangelical church.

The downtown location of the church was excellent, but Stoyan noticed a problem. The church was dead. People gathered to worship on Sabbaths, but that was all. No cooking classes or children's programs during the week. No prayer meetings.

Stoyan asked the owners of the evangelical church for permission to rent

the building during the week, but they declined without explanation.

Stoyan decided to look for a new building on his own. He combed the neighborhood, walking up and down streets. Nothing. He started a prayer group to lift up the matter to God.

Months passed.

In March 2017, Stoyan stopped looking for a church building. Instead, he announced that the church would hold an Easter concert.

The church had no choir. It didn't have a place for a concert. Stoyan told the church's young people that they would organize the concert and sing. The youth willingly formed a choir, and Stoyan rented a hall with 50 seats for the concert.

The day before the concert, however, the landlord backed out, saying he had rented the hall to someone else.

Stoyan walked the streets and prayed. Passing a shopping center with many vacant shops, he considered speaking with the owner. But he only had a little money, and the owner wasn't interested in renting to religious groups. Nevertheless, Stoyan called the owner and, to his surprise, was able to rent a vacant shop for the concert.

The concert was a big success.

Afterward, the owner stopped by as church members cleaned up the hall.

“You are interesting people,” he said. “I expected lots of noise and shouting, but you are very well-mannered.”

Learning that the congregation needed a place to rent, he offered to knock down a wall and combine two shops into a large hall. He also offered a third shop on another floor where the church could hold children’s programs for the community. The rental contract cost less than a contract to lease a church out of the city.

After the West Sofia church moved into the shopping center, church attendance grew rapidly, and the church’s outreach programs mushroomed. The shopping center also saw changes. New tenants moved in, and the once-empty center bustled. This was not lost on the owner.

“You have brought me luck, and many people are renting now!” he exclaimed.

Church members started health classes, a cooking school, and children’s programs. Five people were baptized in the first year at the new location.

“Two years ago, this was unthinkable,” Stoyan said. “Before, I only went to church, preached, and returned home. God has opened doors.”

But the church needed its own building. The pastor knew that the rent would not always remain low. In any case, church membership quickly shot up to 120, leaving little room to grow in the hall.

It was then that Stoyan learned from Bulgarian church leaders that his church had been chosen to receive part of the Thirteenth Sabbath Offering in first quarter 2020.

Stoyan was thrilled!

Looking back, he said it is no coincidence that good things started to happen when he stopped worrying about finding a new church building and instead

Story Tips

- Pronounce Stoyan as: sto-YAN.
- Watch Stoyan on YouTube: bit.ly/Stoyan-Petkov.
- Download photos on Facebook (bit.ly/fb-mq) or ADAMS databank (bit.ly/miracle-church).
- Download photos of Thirteenth Sabbath projects: bit.ly/eud-2020-projects.

Mission Post

- In 1899, Ellen G. White’s “Steps to Christ” was translated into Bulgarian and published in Bulgaria, the first Adventist book to be translated into that language.

In a population of 7,076,000, there is one Seventh-day Adventist for every 999 people in Bulgaria.

Bulgaria’s Rila Monastery houses a wooden cross with 140 microscopic scenes from the Bible. The biggest of the 1,500 figures featured is smaller than a grain of rice.

focused on spreading the gospel.

“The Lord provided us with a new place to rent when we planned the Easter concert,” he said. “It was at that moment that I knew the Lord would provide us with our very own church building one day. It’s important to move forward in spreading the gospel.” 🌍

Thank you for planning a generous Thirteenth Sabbath offering to help construct a new building for Sofia West Seventh-day Adventist Church in Bulgaria’s capital, Sofia.

By Andrew McChesney

Stranger With Warm Eyes



BULGARIA | January 18

Jivko Grushev, 69

The retired 67-year-old professor arrived at Bulgaria's national police academy with his last three copies of Ellen White's "The Great Controversy."

His mission: Enter the heavily guarded campus and deliver a book to the police academy's commander.

It had been a busy week for Jivko Grushev as he presented "The Great Controversy" to university leaders across Bulgaria's capital, Sofia. After delivering about 100 books, Jivko had three left in his bag. He walked up to the police officer guarding the police academy's gates. Just as he arrived at the gates, he watched a black limousine drive out.

Greeting the police officer, Jivko said he wished to visit the commander.

"The commander isn't here," the officer said.

He had just left in the black limousine.

"Then I would like to speak with his secretary," Jivko said.

"What do you want to discuss with her?" the officer asked.

The question was unexpected, but Jivko immediately replied, "I would like to discuss a certain donation with her."

The officer wrote down Jivko's personal information and waved him onto the campus.

Walking to the academy's mammoth administrative building, Jivko wondered whether the officer had called ahead to announce his visit.

At the lobby's entrance, Jivko found a small gate and a glass booth for a police guard. The gate, however, was open, and the glass booth was empty. Several police officers spoke animatedly near a gray marble staircase in the lobby.

Jivko boldly walked through the gate and asked the police officers for directions to the secretary.

"That way," an officer replied, gruffly, pointing to the gate and out the exit.

Jivko walked out the gate but remained in the building.

"Lord, I came to bring Your light here," he prayed. "Please intervene."

The police officers resumed their conversation.

At that moment, a man in his early 30s descended the gray marble staircase. His eyes met Jivko's and seemed to be saying, "Wait a minute." The man walked over to the police officers and spoke to them.

Jivko couldn't take his eyes off the man. He had never seen such an imposing, dignified-looking police officer. The man was slender and handsome.

"What does he do?" Jivko wondered.

The man wore black like the other officers, but his clothing was of a much higher quality. No epaulets decorated his shoulders.

When the man finished speaking with the officers, he looked at Jivko with warm eyes as if to say, "It is finished." Then he walked out the gate, passed Jivko, and exited the building.

The gruff officer rushed to the guard booth, and a female officer joined him. The two officers asked in unison, "Are you going to visit the secretary?"

The female officer jotted down Jivko's personal information, and the gruff officer said, "I'll take you to the secretary." He ran up the marble stairs as if he were being chased, skipping two stairs at a time. Jivko struggled to keep up. At the top of the stairs, the officer opened a door and stared at the floor as Jivko entered. He closed the door from the outside.

Jivko introduced himself to the secretary and placed his three books in front of her.

"These are gifts for the commander and his deputies," he said.

Leaving the academy a short time later, Jivko joyfully thanked God for helping him to accomplish a seemingly impossible mission. His mind returned to the handsome police officer with warm eyes. The man had appeared just in time to solve his problem. The books never would have been handed over to the secretary without his help.

Jivko had no doubt that the man was

Story Tips

- Pronounce Jivko as: DZHEEV-ko.
- Watch Jivko on YouTube: bit.ly/Jivko-Grushev.
- Download photos on Facebook (bit.ly/fb-mq) or ADAMS databank (bit.ly/stranger-with-eyes).
- Download photos of Thirteenth Sabbath projects: bit.ly/eud-2020-projects.

Fast Facts

- Bulgaria is the oldest country in Europe that hasn't changed its name since it was first established, which was in 681 A.D.
- The first digital wristwatch was invented by a Bulgarian named Peter Petroff.
- Bulgarians shake their heads to mean "yes" and nod for "no."

an angel sent by God so he could share the message of salvation. He remembered how Hebrews 1:14 describes angels, saying, "Are they not all ministering spirits sent forth to minister for those who will inherit salvation?"

The encounter with the kind stranger with warm eyes changed Jivko's spiritual life, and he often thinks about that day.

"God is great in His desire to save people," he said. "My heavenly Friend is so wonderful." 🌍

Jivko is an elder at Sofia West Seventh-day Adventist Church, which will receive part of this quarter's Thirteenth Sabbath Offering to construct its own church building in Bulgaria's capital. Thank you for planning a generous offering.

By Andrew McChesney

Trains, Trucks, and Sabbath



BULGARIA | January 25

Rosen Nakov, 48

The 10-year-old boy listened in amazement to his first sermon in a Seventh-day Adventist church.

The preacher told the story of a postman who picked up a letter addressed to Santa Claus. A small boy had written the letter, and he longed for a toy train. The postman didn't have a child of his own, and he decided to buy a toy train for the boy.

The boy was delighted to receive the present!

As young Rosen Nakov listened to the story, he also was delighted. He also had longed for a toy train in his home in Sofia, Bulgaria.

The story touched his heart, and he returned to the church the next Sabbath. And then the next. Soon he made friends with people at church and formed a friendship with Jesus.

After graduating from high school,

Rosen needed to sign up for compulsory military service in the then-communist country. But he had two options: He could enlist as a soldier for two years, or he could work in a factory for five years. He chose the factory to avoid any problems with observing the Sabbath.

At least 10 Adventists worked at a mammoth truck factory in Sofia, and Rosen decided to work there for his alternative military service. Visiting the factory, Rosen met an Adventist who invited him to join him in a department that installed engines into trucks.

Rosen went to the factory office to apply for the position. A manager, however, looked at Rosen's application papers and saw that he had experience as a car mechanic.

"Why are you applying for that job of installing engines?" he said. "You should repair truck engines in the garage."

Rosen immediately asked whether the position gave Saturdays off.

"Yes," the manager replied. "The job is from Monday to Friday."

He sent Rosen to the human resources department to finish the paperwork. When Rosen presented his documents at human resources, however, a manager said, "Why are you applying to repair truck engines? You should work in the garage's small engines shop."

On Rosen's first day at the factory, he learned that six other people worked in the small engines shop. On lunch break in the factory cafeteria, a new coworker asked, "Tell us, who do you know in top management?"

"What do you mean?" Rosen asked.

"You must have a high-level friend in top management to get this job," said another coworker.

Rosen learned that the small engines shop was one of the most popular places to work at the factory. Many of the thousands of employees at the factory engaged in difficult, dirty labor. But the work on car motors at the small engines shop was relatively light and clean. All of Rosen's coworkers had received their jobs because they had friends in top management.

Rosen realized that by honoring God with the Sabbath, God had honored him with a coveted job.

Across the cafeteria table, a coworker pressed Rosen for an answer.

"Who's your friend?" he said.

Rosen pointed heavenward.

"My Friend is above," he said.

From that day, everyone in the small engine shop and the larger garage knew that he was a Seventh-day Adventist. Many sought his assistance as word spread that he was an expert mechanic. He was the only Adventist in the garage.

"Many Adventists worked in the factory, but none worked in the garage," he said in an interview. "Apparently, God needed me there."

Rosen, now 48, doesn't know whether any coworkers accepted Jesus through his influence, but he is certain that God had a plan.

"Just like God used the toy train story

Story Tips

- Pronounce Rosen as: ROS-en.
- Watch Rosen on YouTube: bit.ly/Rosen-Nakov.
- Download photos on Facebook (bit.ly/fb-mq) or ADAMS databank (bit.ly/trains-trucks-sabbath).
- Download photos of Thirteenth Sabbath projects: bit.ly/eud-2020-projects.

Fast Facts

- The official language of Bulgaria is Bulgarian, and all ethnic groups speak it either as a first or second language. It is the oldest-written Slavic language and is written in the Cyrillic alphabet.
- The national instrument is the bagpipes, called the gaida in Bulgaria. There are only three nations in the world that employ the bagpipes in their traditional music — Scotland, Ireland, and Bulgaria.
- Although Bulgaria allied with Germany during World War II, it was one of only two countries (the other was Finland) that protected its Jewish inhabitants from being sent to Nazi concentration camps.

to touch my heart as a boy, perhaps He wanted me to be in the garage so I could touch someone's heart," he said. "The good Lord knows how to touch every person's heart." 🌍

Part of this quarter's Thirteenth Sabbath Offering will help construct a church building for Sofia West Seventh-day Adventist Church in Rosen's hometown, Sofia, Bulgaria. Thank you for planning a generous offering.

By Andrew McChesney



Stoned in Sicily

Salvatrice “Salvina” Mazza, 85

Father took 13-year-old Salvina Mazza on a 33-mile (43-kilometer) bicycle ride on the Italian island of Sicily.

But the outing wasn’t for fun.

“A family in the village of Rosolini asked for help in understanding the Bible,” Father said before they left. “Come and listen so you can learn how to share Jesus.”

Father didn’t own a car, so he and Salvina hopped on their bicycles for the trip from the mountainside town of Ragusa. They were joined by a friend, Giovanni Giallanza, the first Seventh-day Adventist in Ragusa. Giovanni had introduced Father to the Adventist Church after learning about Adventists in Belgium.

After some time, the two men and girl arrived at the family’s home in Rosolini. Neighbors excitedly poked their heads out of doors and windows.

“Who are these strangers?” asked one.

“What are they doing here?” said another.

The neighbors followed the visitors into the family’s home, and soon the house was packed with people. The man who had invited Father to visit asked a question

from the Bible. Father opened his Bible and showed the answer. The man asked another question, and Father replied from the Bible.

Two women didn’t seem happy with the answers that Father gave, and they left the house. About 20 minutes later, two well-dressed men carrying briefcases walked in the door. After listening for a short time, one spoke to the other.

“There is nothing going on here,” he said. “They are just talking about the gospel.”

The two men left. They were police officers sent by the two unhappy women.

Three hours later, the meeting ended, and Father said good-bye.

“If you want to study more, let me know, and I’ll return,” he said.

Outside, Salvina got onto her bicycle and followed Father and his friend to the road back to Ragusa. To her surprise, the road was lined with hundreds of people.

“Father, is there a religious festival going on?” Salvina asked.

“Yes,” he said. “There is a big festival going on — for us!”

Urgency filled his voice.

“Let’s pedal quickly so we can get through the crowd,” he said.

The trio pedaled as fast as they could.
Loud cries rose from the crowd.

“We don’t need this kind of church,”
someone said.

“We don’t want Protestants here,”
said another.

People picked up stones and hurled
them at the cyclists.

“Don’t react,” Father said. “Just pedal.”

Salvina pedaled as fast as she could.

A safe distance from the crowd, Father
stopped to see whether anyone was
injured. Everyone was fine. The three
bowed their heads in prayer.

“Thank you, God, for protecting us,”
Father said. “The crowd threw stones, but
no one was hurt.”

No one from Rosolini asked Father to
visit again.

Father, whose name is Carmelo
Mazza, faced many hardships sharing his
faith. He rode his bicycle around Sicily,
working as a photographer, after World
War II. But he was not discouraged by
the stone-throwing crowd in 1946 or
by other difficulties. He and Giovanni
opened the first Adventist church in
Ragusa in 1952, and they also established
three other churches in Mazzarrone,
Modica, and Vittoria.

Salvina is now 85, but she remembers
the bicycle ride well.

“It was a great miracle that I will never
forget,” she said.

After the attack, she has never been
afraid to speak about Jesus. She treated
neighbors with patience and love when
they snubbed her for being an Adventist.
She shared her faith in school even
though classmates and the priest scoffed.
Even now, she speaks with enthusiasm
about her convictions.

“I love to share the gospel,” she said. 🌐

Story Tip

- Pronounce Salvina as: sal-VINA.
- Watch Salvina on YouTube:
bit.ly/Salvina-Mazza.
- Download photos on Facebook
(bit.ly/fb-mq) or ADAMS databank
(bit.ly/Stoned-in-Sicily).
- Download photos of Thirteenth Sabbath
projects: bit.ly/eud-2020-projects.

Mission Post

- Italy occupies a unique place in
denominational history in that it was
the first country in Europe in which
Adventist doctrines were preached. M.B.
Czechowski, a Polish former Catholic
priest, had been baptized in 1857, and
had worked among French-speaking
people in North America. He failed to
persuade the Seventh-day Adventists to
send him to Europe, so he went under
the sponsorship of another Adventist
denomination, arriving in Torre Pellice,
in the Waldensian valleys of Piedmont,
northern Italy, in 1864, where he taught
Seventh-day Adventist doctrines.
- Italian Adventist University Villa
Aurora (Istituto Avventista di Cultura
Biblica Villa Aurora) is located in
Florence, Italy and teaches theology, the
Italian language, art, and culture, the
latter to mostly foreign students.

Part of a 2016 Thirteenth Sabbath
Offering helped construct a church
building in Ragusa. Church members had
met in rented premises since the church
was cofounded by Salvina’s father in 1952,
and they are grateful to have their own
building. Thank you for having made it
possible with your offering.

By Andrew McChesney

From Village to Palace



ITALY | February 8

Vincenzo Mazza, 70

Father exploded in rage when 16-year-old Vincenzo Mazza returned home to their village on Italy's island of Sicily and announced that he had been baptized into the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

Father's anger grew when the teen declared plans to become a pastor.

"If you go, don't come back," said Father, an impoverished World War II veteran who strictly raised five children.

Little did anyone realize that one day Vincenzo would lead the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Italy and study the Bible with the country's president.

Father's threats didn't discourage the boy, who was baptized during an extended visit with an older brother, himself a new Adventist, in another city. Vincenzo traveled to the Adventist seminary, Villa Aurora, in Florence. On arrival, he

learned that he couldn't enroll without money and no work was available.

Disappointed, he walked around a small garden on the seminary grounds. He didn't want to return to Sicily because Father would demand that he denounce his faith to live at home. He prayed desperately.

Suddenly, he heard a whisper in his ear. "Look into your shirt pocket," it said.

Vincenzo reached into his pocket and found a piece of paper with the address of a German family whom he had met by chance on his arrival in Florence. The family had invited him to visit them in Karlsruhe, Germany.

He remembered that the Adventist Church had a seminary in Germany, in the city of Darmstadt. Counting his coins, he had just enough to buy a one-way train ticket to Karlsruhe, about 60 miles (100 kilometers) south of Darmstadt.

Vincenzo took the train to Karlsruhe and, staying one night, told the family about his desire to study at the seminary. The family bought him a train ticket to Darmstadt.

The teen arrived with no money, no knowledge of German, and no directions to the seminary. He walked around for several hours, looking for the seminary. Reaching a forest, he kept walking and soon was lost. The sun was setting, and he was cold and afraid. Uncertain what to do, and he wept and prayed to God for help.

"Hey, young man!" a voice said, causing

him to jump. “What are you looking for?”

Vincenzo hadn’t heard anyone approaching, and he looked up with surprise to see a small, old man with white hair. Astonishing him even more, the old man was speaking in German but he could understand everything that he said.

“I’m looking for the Adventist seminary,” Vincenzo replied in Italian.

“I’ll tell you how to get there,” said the old man, still speaking in German.

The old man gave detailed directions, and Vincenzo walked away. After several steps, he turned around to thank the kind stranger. He was gone.

Vincenzo reached the seminary and explained his situation to the teachers. They enrolled him and provided work.

Vincenzo went on to become a lifelong pastor of churches in Germany and Italy. He served as leader of the Adventist Church in Italy from 1995 until his retirement in 2000.

He kept in regular contact with his father. After much time had passed, Father begged Vincenzo for forgiveness.

“I have been an authoritarian father,” he said during a visit by Vincenzo, his wife, and two sons to Sicily one summer. “I recognize this, and I am very sad about what I have done to my children.”

As leader of the Adventist Church in Italy, Vincenzo once wrote a letter of gratitude to Italian President Oscar Luigi Scalfaro for supportive remarks that the president had made about Protestants.

A few days after mailing the letter in 1997, President Scalfaro called to invite Vincenzo to visit the presidential palace.

After the first visit, they became good friends. President Scalfaro invited him several times and always said, “Pastor

Story Tips

- Pronounce Vincenzo as: vihn-CHEHN-zoh.
- Watch Vincenzo’s son Andreas on YouTube: bit.ly/Andreas-Mazza.
- Download photos on Facebook (bit.ly/fb-mq) or ADAMS databank (bit.ly/Village-to-Palace).
- Download photos of Thirteenth Sabbath projects: bit.ly/eud-2020-projects.

Fast Facts

- Sicily’s Etna is the tallest active volcano in Europe, and it is still active. Spectacular eruptions are often visible from many miles (kilometers) away.

Mazza, please read the Bible with me. Please pray with me.”

A highlight of the friendship came when the president accepted an invitation from Vincenzo to attend the opening of an Adventist retirement home in Forle in 1998. The president’s presence transformed the low-key event into national news. People across Italy who had never heard about the Adventist Church were introduced to the church and the seventh-day Sabbath.

Today, Vincenzo is 70 and has advanced Parkinson’s disease. But he remains a pastor at heart, and he posts short sermons on his Facebook page. 🌐

Part of this quarter’s Thirteenth Sabbath Offering will help renovate the main building at Marienhöhe Academy in Darmstadt, Germany. Thank you for planning a generous offering.

By Andrew McChesney

Challenging the Sabbath



GERMANY | February 15

Vincenzo Gallina, 29

German IT specialist Vincenzo Gallina couldn't comprehend what was happening.

One global crisis seemed to be followed by another — 9/11, European financial turmoil, Crimea, and a migrant crisis.

Something was wrong. Vincenzo wondered whether the world was ending. He struggled to understand politicians' seemingly illogical decisions. He looked for answers on YouTube. He returned to the church of his childhood.

Vincenzo didn't attend only the usual Sunday worship services. He also went to services on Saturdays and Wednesdays. Church leaders were so impressed with the his interest in religion that they tried to convince him to become a priest. Vincenzo declined. He only wanted answers to global events and to live a holy life.

As he searched, he embraced three important principles in his heart: to

follow the truth no matter where it led; to be honest with others and especially to himself; and to act the way that he spoke.

Reading the Bible, he became frustrated. He didn't understand what he read.

One night, he prayed desperately for God to send someone to explain the Bible.

"God forgive me for I am too stupid to understand Your Word," he prayed.

The next time he browsed YouTube, he stumbled across a sermon by a Seventh-day Adventist evangelist. Something clicked in his mind as he listened. He liked that the evangelist used the Bible to back up everything that he said.

Soon he was watching five YouTube sermons a day, his mind like a dry sponge, absorbing new knowledge.

Convinced that the seventh day is the biblical Sabbath, he began to attend an Adventist church in his hometown, Cologne, on Saturdays. He wanted to worship the Creator God. He wanted to prove the devil wrong in saying that it is impossible to keep God's commandments. He wanted to be honest and to follow the truth wherever it led.

Because he was still living with his parents, he found it difficult to live a holy life. His parents did not pray before meals, and he heard the television playing on Sabbath. Doubts crept into his mind about the importance of keeping the Sabbath. He pondered Jesus' words in Matthew 2:27,

"The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath." He remembered Paul saying, "You are not under the law but under grace" in Romans 6:14. He stopped keeping the Sabbath.

One Friday evening after sunset, Vincenzo was working on his computer when he sensed a voice say, "You know, you are not keeping one of My commandments."

Vincenzo remembered his principle about being honest to others and himself.

"Yes, I am not keeping the Sabbath," Vincenzo said. "But is it really that important?"

He returned to his work.

"You know, you are not keeping the law," the voice said. "What you are doing is not right."

"But is it really so important to keep this day?" Vincenzo said, picking up his dark-green Bible from the table. "Didn't Jesus say that man is made for the Sabbath? Aren't we no longer under the law?"

The voice wouldn't stop.

Finally, Vincenzo prayed for guidance. He knelt and, with the Bible in his hand, asked God for a clear answer.

"Do You want me to keep the Sabbath?" he prayed. "Is this day important to You? I need help in making this decision."

He thought that he needed to create an opportunity for God to answer. Looking down at the Bible in his hand, he decided to open it at random and accept whatever answer God gave. Vincenzo closed his eyes and opened the Bible. Looking into the Bible, he read Isaiah 58:13, 14, which says, "If you turn away your foot from the Sabbath, from doing your pleasure on My holy day, and call the Sabbath a delight, the holy day of the Lord honorable, and shall honor Him, not doing your own

Story Tips

- Pronounce Vincenzo as: vihn-CHEHN-zoh.
- Watch Vincenzo on YouTube: bit.ly/Vincenzo-Gallina.
- Download photos on Facebook (bit.ly/fb-mq) or ADAMS databank (bit.ly/Challenging-the-Sabbath).
- Download photos of Thirteenth Sabbath projects: bit.ly/eud-2020-projects.

Mission Post

- Scattered Sabbath-keepers and small groups of people who anticipated Christ's soon return appeared in Germany as early as 1844. There were Christians in Bavaria who accepted the biblical Sabbath, inspired by the writings of Tennhardt, an 18th-century Nürnberg Bible student. In 1902, two Württemberg men who had been keeping the seventh-day Sabbath for more than 50 years were baptized into the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

ways, nor finding your own pleasure, nor speaking your own words, then you shall delight yourself in the Lord."

Vincenzo started to cry. He could not work after receiving an answer like that. He turned off the computer and opened the Bible.

Since then, Vincenzo has had no doubt about keeping the Sabbath. He returned to church on Sabbath morning and, now 29, has kept going ever since. 🌍

Part of this quarter's Thirteenth Sabbath Offering will help renovate the main building at Marienhöhe Academy in Darmstadt, Germany. Thank you for planning a generous offering.

By Andrew McChesney

Atheist Missionary



GERMANY | February 22

Jan Haugg, 30

Nothing thrilled Jan Haugg more than saving the environment.

As an 18-year-old high school student, he joined a German political party to tackle global environmental problems.

At the university, he invited friends to watch environmental films and tried to make his own life greener through choices in food, travel, cleaning agents, and hygiene. He even went through apartments that he shared with roommates and turned off unneeded lights, much to the annoyance of others.

He was a missionary, but without Jesus. His religion was saving the environment.

As an international business student, Jan secured an internship at an environmentally friendly bank and decided to fulfill an international work requirement in Norway's capital, Oslo. But he had trouble finding an affordable place to stay in Oslo. Then he remembered

a family that he had met two years earlier while, in an attempt to learn how to be more self-sufficient, he had spent a summer on a Norwegian farm. He e-mailed the family for help and, several days later, they replied that they had found a place in Oslo.

Soon after Jan arrived in Oslo, he realized that he was surrounded by Seventh-day Adventists. His new roommate, David Mikkelsen, was an Adventist living in a small room in a church-owned home for Adventist students. Jan was a die-hard atheist from the former East Germany, which has the highest concentration of atheists in the world. More than 60 percent of the east German population identifies as atheist.

Although grateful for a place to stay, Jan thought, "They will try to convert me, but they won't get me. I know what I believe."

Nothing happened for three months. Jan liked the Adventist students, and they treated him kindly, even when he violated the rules with alcohol. They gained his confidence by taking care of his needs.

One day, Jan was invited to join 50 young Adventists on a boat trip to southern Norway. Jan enjoyed the outing and was pleased that the youth showed interest in his desire to protect the environment.

Then one of the youth leaders, Joakim Hjortland, invited Jan to study the Bible with him. Jan wasn't interested, but he didn't want to offend Joakim. He tried to

come up with a good excuse.

“We don’t have time today,” he said. “Maybe tomorrow.”

The next morning, Joakim said, “Hey, remember what we talked about yesterday? How about studying the Bible?”

Jan tried another excuse. “I can’t study the Bible because I don’t have a Bible,” he said. Later, he called it the stupidest excuse that he could have given. He was surrounded by people with Bibles. Within moments, he was holding a Bible.

To believe the Bible, a person first needs to believe that it is God’s word. Jan didn’t believe in God. Joakim opened the Bible to Daniel 2. Jan listened with shock to Daniel’s prophecy about the rise and fall of the kingdoms of Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, and Rome. He saw that present-day Europe was fragmented as shown in the statue’s feet of iron and clay.

He decided that the Bible contained supernatural information and bought one for further study. In Oslo, Adventist friends helped him find biblical answers to questions about the origin of sin, why God hadn’t destroyed Satan, and how the biblical account of Creation could be believed over evolution. The day came when he decided to give his heart to God.

“I never wanted to become a Christian, but the weight of the evidence was too heavy,” he said. “There must be God. And if God is there, and He is who He says He is, then there is no logical consequence but to follow Him. Who wants to join the losing team that has already lost the battle? That would be stupid. I wanted to be on the winning team.”

Today, Jan is 30 and training to be a pastor at the Bogenhofen Seminary in Austria. After graduation, he hopes to

Story Tips

- Pronounce Jan as: yan.
- Watch Jan on YouTube: bit.ly/Jan-Haugg.
- Download photos on Facebook (bit.ly/fb-mq) or ADAMS databank (bit.ly/Atheist-Missionary).
- Download photos of Thirteenth Sabbath projects: bit.ly/eud-2020-projects.

Fast Facts

- Germany is known as *das land der dichter und denker*, “the land of poets and thinkers”—composers Bach, Beethoven, Händel, Schumann, Mendelssohn, Brahms, Wagner and Strauss were all German. Some of the world’s greatest philosophers include Kant, Hegel, Schopenhauer, Nietzsche, and Heidegger. Famous German authors include Goethe, Schiller, Hoffman and Remarque. Some well-known artists are Holbein, Dürer, Friedrich, and Klee.

share the gospel with atheists in eastern Germany as well as with environmental activists. “I especially want to minister to the green movement people who want to save the world with their own strength,” he said. “If they would just get Jesus into the picture, their efforts could be channeled into the right direction. They are missionaries, but without Jesus, their work will not result in eternal life.” 🌐

Part of this quarter’s Thirteenth Sabbath Offering will help renovate the main building at Marienhöhe Academy in Darmstadt, Germany. Thank you for planning a generous offering.

By Andrew McChesney

Praying in the Bathroom



SPAIN | February 29

Dante Marvin Herrmann, 36

It was a tough first year at the Seventh-day Adventist college in Spain.

Dante Marvin Herrmann used up the last of his savings to pay the annual tuition of about 5,000 euros. Between classes, he worked to earn another 5,000 euros to provide for his wife and two young sons.

Now he faced a long summer away from home, working as a literature evangelist to pay for his second year of studies.

Dante didn't mind the hard work, but he hadn't enrolled at Sagunto Adventist College to sell books. He wanted to spend the summer traveling from church to church, telling how he, a tattoo-covered German, had left a life of drugs in the Canary Islands to become an Adventist.

Dante needed to talk to God about his financial problems. He made his way to his favorite place of quiet solitude — the apartment bathroom — and locked the

door. Kneeling, he poured out his heart.

"Papa, the first year has finished. I received top marks in my classes, and I see that You have called me here," he said.

Dante always addresses God as "Papa" in his personal prayers.

"Papa, I know You provide scholarships to some students," he said. "Please help me because I don't want to work as a literature evangelist with a focus on earning money. I want to preach Jesus. I need freedom to preach. I don't have any money after using up my savings. Papa, please help me."

Dante paused, and he sensed a still, small voice replying within him.

"How much do you need?"

"Let me see," Dante said. "I have five years left at the college, and it costs 10,000 euros per year. I need 50,000 euros."

"OK, Dante," the voice said. "Do you believe that I can give it to you?"

"You know that I don't believe," Dante said. "But I'm very grateful that You can help me to believe, and I thank You now for giving me 50,000 euros."

Ten minutes later, Dante received 50,000 euros.

After praying, he left the bathroom and went to the guest room to check on his mother, who was visiting.

"Hi," he said as he walked into the room. "You know that I love you."

Mother sat motionless on the bed, her

Story Tips

- Watch Dante on YouTube: bit.ly/Dante-Herrmann.
- Download photos on Facebook (bit.ly/fb-mq) or ADAMS databank (bit.ly/Dante-photos).
- Download photos of Thirteenth Sabbath projects: bit.ly/eud-2020-projects.

Mission Post

- The territory of Spain was assigned to the Latin Union Conference when it was organized in 1902. B.G. Wilkinson, Jean Vuilleumier, and Jules Robert were sent in 1903 to survey the possibilities and to evaluate prospects for evangelism in Spain, giving special attention to the large cities of Barcelona and Madrid. On his return, Jules Robert wrote, “After a stay of four weeks in Spain, we have only good reports to give of this country, in regard to the facilities for evangelization, because, in spite of existing conditions, God has opened a way” (in “Messenger de la Prophétie,” May 1903).

face as white as a sheet. She held her cellphone in one hand.

“What happened?” Dante asked, alarmed.

“Something amazing happened,” she said.

“What is it?” he said.

“You know, I have been trying to sell my house in Germany for 10 years,” she said. “Well, I just received a WhatsApp message from a man who wants to buy the house, and he offered 50,000 euros more than I asked.”

Dante didn’t know what to do. He didn’t feel that it would be right to blurt out, “That’s my money. I prayed for it.”

“Wait,” he said out loud. “Wait a moment. I have to go to the bathroom.”

Locking the door, he knelt on the floor.

“Papa, if I had asked for 100,000 euros, would You have given it to me?” he said.

“Dante,” the voice said. “You asked for 50,000 euros, and I gave you 50,000 euros.”

“Yes, but if I had asked for 100,000, would you have given it to me?”

“Yes, I would have given 100,000 euros. But you asked for 50,000, so I gave 50,000.”

“Can I change my mind?”

“No, you can’t,” the voice said. “You have to learn to think bigger. You think very small. You think for only the moment, but I want to give you more. I want you to believe in Me. I want you to believe that I will give you what you need.”

“OK,” Dante said. “But who will tell my mother that she should give this money?”

“Do you believe that I can do it?”

“Yes, I believe, I believe!”

Dante exclaimed.

He returned to the guest room, where his mother was still sitting on the bed.

“Dante, you know something?” she said as he entered the room. “I think it would be best if I gave you this extra money so you can pay for your studies.”

Dante, who is 36 and finishing his second year of studies, believes God guides those who walk in obedience and faith.

“When God answered my prayer, I realized that walking with God was walking with faith,” Dante said. “God doesn’t necessarily reveal to you all that will happen. He only asks you to trust in Him. 🌐

Part of this quarter’s Thirteenth Sabbath Offering will help Sagunto Adventist College expand its campus with a new seminary building, allowing more students like Dante to study to serve God.

By Andrew McChesney

Same Dream for 10 Years

SPAIN | March 7

Laurentiu Stefan Druga, 35



Only three Seventh-day Adventist children attended the elementary school near Romania's capital, Bucharest.

All three were in Laurentiu Stefan Druga's eighth grade class, and before long they invited him to church. Laurentiu fell in love with Jesus and was baptized.

A desire blossomed in him to become a pastor. The Adventist school in Bucharest, however, only had 20 openings, and Laurentiu had to score well on the entrance exam. On exam day, Laurentiu entered the classroom and sat at a big table. He looked down at the paper in front of him and took the exam. He placed 21st.

"No problem," he told his parents. "I'll try again next year."

That year, however, he grew careless in his spiritual life. When the time came for the entrance exam, he entered the same classroom. He sat at the same big table. He looked down at the paper. But something

felt wrong. He knew that he was living an ungodly life, and his mind went blank. Abruptly, he stood up and left the room.

Several years passed. Laurentiu moved to Spain and became a construction worker. He got married and drifted farther from God. At the age of 23, he met an uncle, an Adventist, also working in Spain. He remembered his first love for God and his desire to become a pastor. He and his wife decided to be baptized together.

Ahead of the big day, Laurentiu began to wonder how to plan his new life. "God," he prayed, "what is your plan for me?"

The next day, he prayed again, "God, what is your plan for me?"

Two nights after his baptism, Laurentiu had a dream. In the dream, he entered a classroom, sat at a big table and looked at a piece of paper. With horror, he realized that he was taking a math exam and hadn't studied for the past year. His mind went blank. Fear turned to panic, and his heart beat wildly. At that moment, Laurentiu woke up. It was 3 a.m. "That was just a dream," he reassured himself.

Falling asleep, he had a second dream. This time he stood, talking and smiling, at the pulpit in his Madrid church. People listened with great interest. Peace flowed through him. He sensed God's presence.

In the morning, Laurentiu dismissed the dreams. That night, he prayed as usual, "God, what is your plan for me?"

Story Tips

- Pronounce Laurentiu as: lau-REN-tee-oo.
- Read a story about Laurentiu's 10-year-old son in the Children's Mission magazine.
- Watch Laurentiu on YouTube: bit.ly/Laurentiu-Druga.
- Download photos on Facebook (bit.ly/fb-mq) or ADAMS databank (bit.ly/same-dream-years).
- Download photos of Thirteenth Sabbath projects: bit.ly/eud-2020-projects.

Fast Facts

- The first known stapler was made in the 18th century in the Basque region of Spain for French King Louis XV — and every single staple was engraved with the royal emblem.

Asleep, he dreamed that he entered a classroom and sat at a big table. Looking down, he saw that he was taking a Romanian-language exam. He hadn't studied for a year, and his mind went blank. He panicked. A moment later, however, he was seated at another table. Now he was smiling and laughing as he spoke to a group of people who listened with interest. Joyfully he sensed God's presence.

Similar dreams occurred nearly every night. The classroom was always the same, but the exam varied. He never was prepared for the exam, and he felt miserable.

Then the scene changed to a church, another table, or a crowd of people. He was teaching and sensed God's presence.

After about three months of dreams, Laurentiu wondered whether God was telling him to become a pastor. "But

how?" he asked God. "I can't quit my job. I'm married and have a family to support."

The dreams kept coming. A year passed. Then two, three, four years. He told his parents and several close friends about the dreams, but they dismissed them as the workings of his subconscious mind.

Eventually, he got used to the dreams. While sleeping, he would wait for the miserable first part to end so he could enjoy the pleasant second part.

Also every evening, Laurentiu kept praying, "God, what is your plan for me?"

After 10 years, Laurentiu told his wife about the dreams. One evening, Laurentiu and his wife attended a youth conference of about 250 people. The speaker seemed to be reading his thoughts. Every time Laurentiu raised an objection in his mind about becoming a pastor, the speaker responded from the platform with an answer. Laurentiu's wife nudged him. "You have to go to the seminary," she said.

Three months later, Laurentiu, his wife, and their 9-year-old son moved to Sagunto Adventist College, located 235 miles (380 kilometers) east of Madrid. From that day, the dreams stopped.

Laurentiu is now immersed in his second year of seminary studies. "Every class that I take and every moment that I have with the teachers is the second part of the dream," he said. "I don't miss the first part of the dream. The second part is now the reality of my every-day life." 🌐

Part of this quarter's Thirteenth Sabbath Offering will help construct a much-needed building for the seminary where Laurentiu studies at Sagunto Adventist College.

By Andrew McChesney

Making a Big Decision



ROMANIA | March 14

Paula Cristina Ghibut, 18

What do you do when you have to make a big decision?

Paula Cristina Ghibut had a big decision to make. She was 14 and about to finish eighth grade in Romania. She had to decide where to go to high school.

Paula wanted to become an elementary school teacher. She could go to a nearby public high school that offered a special teaching track for high school students. But she had attended Adventist schools since kindergarten. The Adventist high school offered only a science track.

Paula prayed and read the Bible at home in Targu Mures village in north-central Romania. She spoke with her parents and read passages from books by Adventist Church cofounder Ellen White.

As she read, she found advice that seemed to suggest Adventist children should study in non-Adventist schools in order to be a light in the world.

In Ellen White's "Counsels to Parents, Teachers, and Students," she read, "The followers of Christ are to be separate from the world in principles and interests, but they are not to isolate themselves from the world" (page 323). In "The Great Controversy," she saw that Waldensian students had used their Christian influence to transform entire schools in the 13th century and beyond. Paula decided to enroll in the public school. She thought it would be a good opportunity to share Jesus as she prepared to become a teacher.

But first she needed to pass the entrance exam. She prayed, "If it is Your will for me to study there, help me to do well."

Competition was fierce for the 150 slots at the school. Four children applied for each opening. Paula placed seventh.

But Paula still didn't feel peace. It was difficult to leave Adventist schools. She knew public school teachers wouldn't pray and students wouldn't sing about Jesus.

Two weeks before classes started, Paula had a nighttime dream that she was at the public school. The teachers were proud and unloving, and they blamed her for the mistakes of her classmates. The false accusations upset Paula. At the end of the day, as she prepared to go home, she heard a voice shout, "Run away, run away, and never come back!" Paula turned around to see who was shouting but saw no one.

Waking up in the morning, she wondered what the dream meant. She

Story Tips

- Watch Paula on YouTube: bit.ly/Paula-Ghibut.
- Download photos on Facebook (bit.ly/fb-mq) or ADAMS databank (bit.ly/making-big-decision).
- Download photos of Thirteenth Sabbath projects: bit.ly/eud-2020-projects.

Mission Post

- Seventh-day Adventist doctrines were first preached in Romania by M.B. Czechowski, a former Polish Catholic priest who had learned of the seventh-day Sabbath and of the imminent return of Christ while he was in the U.S. Returning to Europe in 1864, he preached these doctrines in Italy and Switzerland even though he had not been sent by the Seventh-day Adventist Church. In the winter of 1868-69 he came to Romania and preached in Pitesti, where about 12 people accepted the message.

wasn't sure that the dream was from God because she knew that the devil also could cause dreams. "God, if this dream is from You, please confirm it to me through another way," she prayed.

Paula turned to her parents for advice. They said she had to decide on her own. So she prayed and fasted for several days. She also read more from the Bible and Ellen White. She was amazed to see that everything she read now indicated that she should go to an Adventist school.

In "Counsels to Parents, Teachers, and Students," she read. "To place over young children, teachers who are proud and unloving is wicked" (page 175). In the same book, she read, "Our church schools

are ordained by God to prepare the children for this great work" (page 176).

She thought, "I wanted to start training to be a teacher at the public school, but the Adventist school can train me even better, even though its emphasis is on science."

Then in "Child Guidance," she read, "In planning for the education of their children outside the home, parents should realize that it is no longer safe to send them to the public school, and should endeavor to send them to schools where they will obtain an education based on a Scriptural foundation" (page 304).

Paula went to the Adventist school.

Paula learned some important lessons about understanding God's will. She prayed and asked her parents for advice. She read the Bible and the writings of Ellen White. Then she made a decision.

Paula is sure that she made the right choice. While at the Adventist high school, she gave her heart to Jesus and was baptized when she was 16. Now she is 18 and will graduate soon. She realizes she will have plenty of time to learn how to be teacher at the university.

"My walk with God has been a process," she said. "I didn't use drugs and then have a miracle conversion story. Instead, God led me step by step. I want to encourage young people also to live step by step for Christ. In every step of our lives, we need to recognize Him, and He will work in our lives." 🌱

Three years ago, part of the Thirteenth Sabbath Offering went to help a church outreach program for young people in Romania. Thank you for your Thirteenth Sabbath Offering.

By Andrew McChesney

God in Prison

Elena, 20



photo: Pixabay

I'm a 20-year-old introvert in Romania, and I love to read personal testimonies.

When I first met a Seventh-day Adventist pastor, he asked me, "What kind of books do you like to read?"

I told him the title of the last book that I had read, a personal testimony written by a Christian author.

A week later, the pastor brought me several books filled with personal testimonies.

One day, I'd like to write my personal testimony.

If I wrote my personal testimony, I'd start with the happy moments in my childhood. I'd describe how I relentlessly teased my great-grandparents, causing them to become upset with me. I was only 4 or 5 years old, and it was great fun to tease them.

If I wrote my personal testimony, I would talk about my first day of school. It was a happy day. My great-grandmother took me to school and later helped me with my homework at home.

My great-grandparents loved me a lot. I lived with them until I went to prison.

If I wrote my personal testimony, I'd tell about the happy moments in prison. I'd describe the good people whom I've met, like the Adventist pastor who visits once a week to teach me and other young offenders about life and God. The pastor comes with three Adventist university students, and they show us educational PowerPoint presentations. I dropped out of school after the eighth grade, so everything that they show is new and interesting. After each PowerPoint presentation, they tell us a story from the Bible. We also pray and talk.

If I wrote my personal testimony, I'd tell about the worst time in my life. It was the nine-month period from my arrest at the age of 17 to my arrival in prison to serve a 12-year sentence. I was so alone. No one from my family visited me, and no one hired a lawyer to represent me.

My great-grandmother died several months before I was arrested, and my

great-grandfather was old and ill. During those long months in pretrial detention, I never heard a kind word.

But everything changed once I arrived in prison. Some of the prison guards are nice, especially the woman who has been assigned to help me rebuild my life. I also like the Adventist prison ministries program. Through the weekly program, I have met wonderful people and grown close to them. I thought I could never be close to anyone.

The Adventists speak kindly, and they are teaching me to be useful and to trust God. That is important to me. I have been in prison for three years and seven months, and I will be eligible for parole in two years. My behavior is very important to qualify for parole. I need to show that I can be independent and useful to society.

If I wrote my personal testimony, I would admit that I have experienced a lifetime of sorrow in just 20 years. It is hard for me to talk about it. My family had financial difficulties. They weren't there for me when they should have been. Many violent things happened in my life. Things happened to me that I couldn't control. Maybe this is the reason that I am not very open about my life. Maybe this is why I'm an introvert.

If my great-grandmother hadn't died, I wouldn't have gone to prison. But things got really bad after she passed away, and I killed someone.

After my release from prison, I would like to have my own family. I want to do something useful in life.

But for now, I'm just a 20-year-old introvert who loves to read personal testimonies. One day, I'd like to write my personal testimony. 🌐

Story Tips

- Ask a young woman to share this first-person testimony during Sabbath School.
- Adventist Mission is not identifying Elena by her full name for the sake of her privacy. For the same reason, no photos or video are being provided of Elena.
- Download photos of Thirteenth Sabbath projects: bit.ly/eud-2020-projects.

Fast Facts

- The name "Romania" comes from the Latin word "Romanus," which means "citizen of the Roman Empire."
- Peles Castle in Sinaia was the first European castle entirely lit by electricity, which was produced by the castle's own plant, and its central heating system, built in 1888, is still functional and in use today.
- The first perfect 10 awarded in the Olympic Games went to Romanian gymnast Nadia Comaneci for her performance on the uneven bars in Montreal, Canada, in 1976.
- The tallest wooden church in the world, and the second-tallest wooden structure in Europe, is found in Sapanta Peri, Maramures, in northwestern Romania. The church is 257 feet (78 meters) tall and is topped by a 23-foot (7-meter) cross that weighs 1,000 pounds (454 kg).

Three years ago, part of the Thirteenth Sabbath Offering went to help a church outreach program for young people in Romania. Thank you for your Thirteenth Sabbath Offering.

By Elena as told to Andrew McChesney

Roma Village Finds Sabbath

13th SABBATH: SLOVAKIA | March 28

Peter Mižigar, 44



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

The 2,000 inhabitants of a Roma settlement in Slovakia considered themselves Christian. But none attended church. None had ever read the Bible.

After Slovakia's independence in 1993, various missionaries started coming to the Rakúsy settlement. The first, a married couple, preached on the main street every Sunday. People gathered to listen but understood little because they had never read the Bible.

One villager, Peter Mižigar, was more interested in performing in his band than listening to the preaching. He played bass guitar at weddings and funerals. Usually, the band members, including his younger brother Pavol, spent the band's earnings on alcohol. But Peter never drank while performing. He was the designated driver.

While performing sober, he noticed that every audience consisted of two groups: one with good manners and high

intelligence, and the other with a more primitive attitude. The other musicians didn't notice because they drank.

Peter watched the crowd with fascination at concerts. The distinctions between the two groups of Roma disappeared as they drank. When people were drunk, the rich ones stripped to the waist and behaved the same as those who were poor. Every event ended with a drunken fistfight, even the funerals.

When an audience turned on Peter and the other musicians in a drunken frenzy in the Czech Republic, Peter and his brother decided to quit. "I'm going to stop playing worldly music," Pavol said. "I would like to play to God."

Pavol had been listening to Christian music shared by visiting missionaries.

Soon, Peter, Pavol, and the other band members were playing Christian music at Pavol's house. During one session, Peter noticed a Bible lying on the table.

"What kind of book is this?" he asked, picking it up.

Pavol snatched it away. "Put it down," he said. "It's not for you."

Thirteenth Sabbath Program

➤	Congregational Song	"Don't Forget the Sabbath" <i>The Seventh-day Adventist Hymnal</i> , No. 388
➤	Welcome	Superintendent or Sabbath School teacher
➤	Prayer	
➤	Program	"Roma Village Finds Sabbath"
➤	Offering	
➤	Closing Song	"Bringing in the Sheaves" <i>The Seventh-day Adventist Hymnal</i> , No. 369
➤	Closing Prayer	

Pavol was studying the Bible and didn't want to share it.

While Pavol and the others were playing, Peter slipped the Bible under an arm and left the house. At home, he read the Bible for the next month, going through Revelation and then the gospels. After a while, he admitted to his brother that he had taken the Bible. As the younger brother, Pavol could ask only that Peter returned it once he finished.

One day, Peter came across Mark 16:16, where Jesus said, "He who believes and is baptized will be saved."

He closed the Bible and opened it. The same verse stared back at him. "He who believes and is baptized will be saved." Three times Peter closed and opened the Bible, and every time it opened to the same verse. Peter grabbed the Bible and ran to his brother's house. Pavol was jamming with two friends.

"Please come and baptize me," Peter said.

He didn't know anything about baptism. He just wanted to obey Jesus and be baptized.

"You want me to baptize you?" Pavol said.

"Yes, it is written here clearly that whoever is baptized will be saved," Peter replied.

Pavol was hesitant, but Peter was adamant. The two brothers and their two friends waded into a three-foot (one-meter) deep brook outside the settlement and baptized one another. They confessed their sins to God and sought forgiveness. Afterward, they experienced a tremendous joy and spoke about all of heaven rejoicing about their baptism.

After that day, the four men stopped cursing, smoking, and drinking. Neighbors were astonished. Before, when the men had drunk, people had fled in fear.

The four friends decided to study the Bible together daily. Sometimes they started at night and read until morning.

Other people joined the Bible group. Often 50 to 100 people were packed in Peter's joint living room and kitchen.

During a late-night session, Peter's attention was drawn to Mark 16:9, which begins, "Now when He rose on the first day of the week." Peter remembered that Jesus and his followers had rested on the seventh day, Saturday, and wondered why missionaries visiting his settlement worshipped on Sunday.

No missionaries were able to answer Peter's question.

The Bible study group kept on reading and found the fourth commandment. They began to keep the Sabbath.

One day, Peter mentioned his perplexity about Sunday to a stranger visiting a Roma relative. The man, Josif, happened to be a Seventh-day Adventist, and he told Peter that there is a church that keeps the biblical Sabbath. At Peter's invitation, Josif spoke to the Bible group. Later Josif took Peter and his friends to visit Adventist churches in the area. Peter especially was impressed with the quiet reverence of an Adventist communion service.

Peter's living room became an Adventist house church with Sabbath worship services and other programs.

Peter, his brother, and 24 other members of the Bible group were baptized

Story Tips

- Read about a 12-year-old boy whose life was changed by Peter's house church in the Children's Mission magazine.
- Watch Peter on YouTube: bit.ly/Peter-Mizigar.
- Download photos on Facebook (bit.ly/fb-mq) or ADAMS databank (bit.ly/roma-village-sabbath).
- Download photos of Thirteenth Sabbath projects: bit.ly/eud-2020-projects.

into the Adventist Church in 2015. Ten more people were baptized over the next two years. In 2018, an Adventist church was constructed on the outskirts of the settlement, and it is packed with about 100 people every Sabbath.

This is the church that God built from the ground up in Peter's living room. 🌐

Part of this quarter's Thirteenth Sabbath Offering will help fund programs for vulnerable children at the church in Rakúsy, Slovakia. Thank you for your generous offering for this project and the others in Bulgaria, Germany, and Spain this quarter.

By Andrew McChesney

Future Thirteenth Sabbath Projects

The Thirteenth Sabbath Offering next quarter will help the Trans-European Division to:

- Open a center of influence in Sortland, Norway
- Establish a church in New Belgrade, Serbia
- Construct a church and a center of influence in Nicosia, Cyprus

Leader's Resources

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

Online Information

Following are sources 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

Bulgaria: government	bit.ly/GovtBul
Visit Europe	bit.ly/VisitBul
Czech Republic: government	bit.ly/GovtCze
Czech Tourism	bit.ly/CzechTour
Germany: government	bit.ly/GovtGer
Germany Travel	bit.ly/GermantTrav
Italy: government	bit.ly/GovtIta
Italia	bit.ly/ItaliaTrav
Romania: government	bit.ly/GovtRom
Romania Tourism	bit.ly/RomTour
Slovakia: government	bit.ly/GovtSlo
Slovakia Travel	bit.ly/SlovTrav
Spain: government	bit.ly/GovtSpa
España	bit.ly/EspanaTrav

Seventh-day Adventist

Inter-European Division	bit.ly/SDA-EUD
Bulgarian Union of Churches Conference	bit.ly/SDABulgUnion
Czecho-Slovakian Union Conference	bit.ly/SDACzechUnion
North German Union Conference	bit.ly/SDANGerUnion
South German Union Conference	bit.ly/SDASGerUnion
Italian Union of Churches Conference	bit.ly/SDAItalyUnion
Romanian Union Conference	bit.ly/SDARomania
Spanish Union of Churches Conference	bit.ly/SDASpainUnion

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-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.

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YOUTH & ADULT MISSION

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Website: AdventistMission.org

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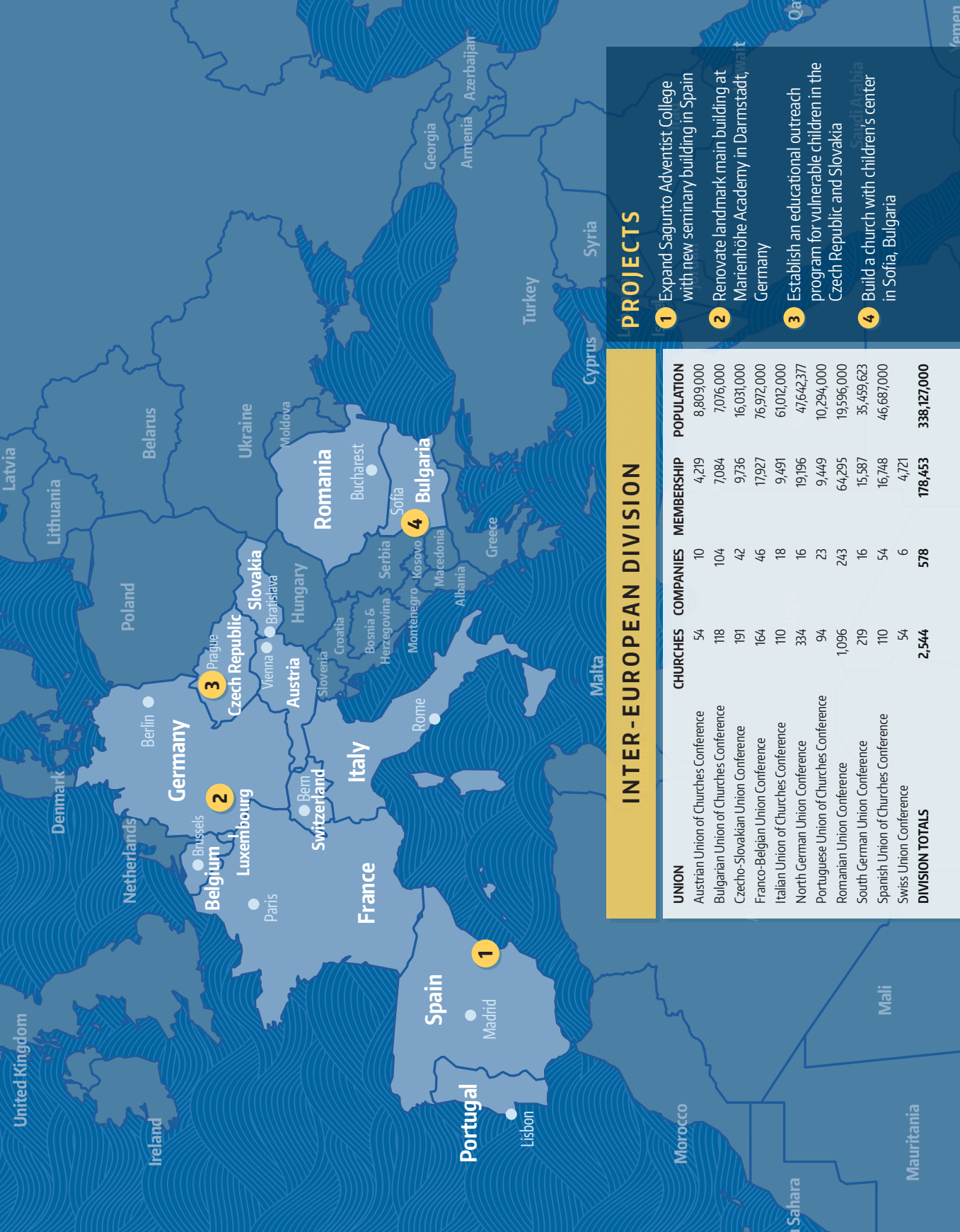
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INTER-EUROPEAN DIVISION

UNION	CHURCHES	COMPANIES	MEMBERSHIP	POPULATION
Austrian Union of Churches Conference	54	10	4,219	8,809,000
Bulgarian Union of Churches Conference	118	104	7,084	7,076,000
Czecho-Slovakian Union Conference	191	42	9,736	16,031,000
Franco-Belgian Union Conference	164	46	17,927	76,972,000
Italian Union of Churches Conference	110	18	9,491	61,012,000
North German Union Conference	334	16	19,196	47,642,377
Portuguese Union of Churches Conference	94	23	9,449	10,294,000
Romanian Union Conference	1,096	243	64,295	19,596,000
South German Union Conference	219	16	15,587	35,459,623
Spanish Union of Churches Conference	110	54	16,748	46,687,000
Swiss Union Conference	54	6	4,721	
DIVISION TOTALS	2,544	578	178,453	338,127,000

PROJECTS

- 1 Expand Sagunto Adventist College with new seminary building in Spain
- 2 Renovate landmark main building at Marienhöhe Academy in Darmstadt, Germany
- 3 Establish an educational outreach program for vulnerable children in the Czech Republic and Slovakia
- 4 Build a church with children's center in Sofia, Bulgaria