



YOUTH & ADULT **MISSION**

2023 • QUARTER 3 • TRANS-EUROPEAN DIVISION



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Dear Sabbath School Leader,

Andrew McChesney

Editor



This quarter we feature the Trans-European Division, which oversees the Seventh-day Adventist Church's work in 22 countries: Albania, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Croatia, Cyprus, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Latvia, Lithuania, Macedonia, Montenegro, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Serbia, Slovenia, Sweden, and the United Kingdom.

The region is home to 207 million people, including 88,273 Adventists. That's a ratio of one Adventist for 2,346 people.

This quarter's Thirteenth Sabbath Offering will assist mission projects in Latvia and Montenegro. In Latvia, the funds will help expand Seventh-day Adventist outreach to children and families by constructing a center of influence in the capital, Riga. At the center, Pathfinders will meet; children will take part in a daycare center, languages courses, and day camps during summer vacations; families will participate in a health club and engage in sports; and the community will have access

to services such as massage, dental care, hairdressing, and a laundry. In Montenegro, the funds will help construct a youth camp in the Adriatic resort town of Zelenika. The camp, which will be located on the site of a dilapidated, nearly 90-year-old building that has long been used by Pathfinders, will serve as a center of education, spiritual development, and mission for children.

Special Features

If you want to make your Sabbath School class come alive, we offer photos and other materials to accompany each mission story. More information is provided in the sidebar with each story. For photos of tourist sites and other scenes from the featured countries, try a free photo bank such as pixabay.com or unsplash.com. You could show the photos to the class on your computer or mobile device while you read the mission story, or you could print the photos to decorate your Sabbath School room or church bulletin board.

In addition, you can download a PDF of facts and activities from the Trans-European Division at bit.ly/TED-2023. Follow us at facebook.com/missionquarterlies. You also can download the PDF version of the *Mission* magazine at bit.ly/adultmission, and Mission Spotlight videos at bit.ly/missionspotlight. If you have found especially effective ways to share mission stories, please let me know at mcchesneya@gc.adventist.org.

Thank you for encouraging others to be mission-minded!

Opportunities

The Thirteenth Sabbath Offering this quarter will support two projects in the Trans-European Division:

- Center of influence, Riga, Latvia
- Youth camp, Zelenika, Montenegro

A Living Miracle



Mother went to medical checkups regularly in the first six months of her pregnancy in Montenegro. The physician didn't notice anything out of the ordinary.

But what Mother and the physician didn't know was that little Voya developed a birth defect 27 days after conception. His spine wasn't developing properly in his lower back. He had a hole in his back. Part of his spinal cord poked through the hole, and those nerves were surrounded by a balloon. Voya had spina bifida.

Mother's belly grew large, and she went to a second physician for assistance. That physician told her that the baby had a balloon measuring six inches (15 centimeters) in diameter on his back.

Mother was hospitalized. The physician said bluntly the baby's prospects weren't good. She said the baby would die or be badly disabled and recommended an induced birth to end the pregnancy quickly.

The next day, on a Friday, the physician ran an ultrasound and found that Voya could

MONTENEGRO | July 1
Milanka

not move his legs. The physician concluded that Voya's legs were useless.

The next day was the Sabbath, a day of rest, but not for Mother. She cried the whole day. That night, she was exhausted and slept for the first time in three days.

On Sunday, Mother woke up and wondered if it was all a bad dream. Then she remembered and started to cry again. Through tears, she spoke to God.

"God, You are almighty and a great God," she said. "You can do everything. You gave life to my Voya. You are the Witness to all that is happening. If you decide to take him, it is not going to be easy for me, but I'll accept it. If it is Your will, I will make peace with that. But if You leave him to me, please leave him healthy. Whatever You decide, I will accept. Just be here and do not allow anything to happen without Your permission. In God's name I beg You. Amen."

After the prayer, peace filled Mother's heart. She was powerless, and her only hope was God. She believed that God would do what was best. But waiting was the hardest part.

God sent a ray of hope already that Sunday afternoon. The physician noticed that Voya's bladder was full. It was an indication that something was working. Children with damaged backs usually have empty bladders.

After 10 days in the hospital, Mother was released. It was as if the physician was saying, "Let her go. Let God's will be done."

A short time later, Mother returned to the hospital. The physician wanted to see if Voya's legs were moving. Mother and Father prayed before they went, and they prayed as they waited for the results.

As the physician did the ultrasound, Voya's

legs remained still. Five minutes passed. Ten minutes. Fifteen minutes. His legs remained still, and Mother and Father kept praying.

"God, please show us Your power once again," Mother prayed. "Comfort us. Make the baby move his legs."

After 20 minutes, the baby began to move both his right and left legs. Mother and Father were overjoyed! They returned home to wait for March 20, the day that the baby was expected to be born.

The physician warned that the baby would be stillborn. But Mother knew in her heart that God had decided to give Voya life. In the month leading up to the delivery date, she prayed constantly.

Right before giving birth, she prayed again. "Dear God, In a few minutes, I will find out whether You have decided to give Voya life or death. Once more I ask You for his life. But not my will but Your will be done. I thank You in Jesus' name, Amen."

The delivery happened very quickly. God gave strength to Mother. She smiled for joy when she heard Voya cry.

Life wasn't easy for the boy. He spent much of his childhood with physicians and in physical therapy. But the physicians say that he is a living miracle. The little boy whom they thought had no chance at life is now a tall, strong teen who loves to run and jump.

"God did a miracle for our Voya," says Mother, whose name is Milanka. "Voya rides a bike and plays soccer without any physical problems. Thank God for everything He has done for my family and me." ☺

Today Voya is a student at the Seventh-day Adventist secondary school in Novi Sad, Serbia, which opened with the help of a Thirteenth Sabbath Offering collected in third quarter 1997. A Thirteenth Sabbath Offering that people gave more than 25 years ago is helping Voya get an Adventist education today.

Voya's family is thankful for this quarter's Thirteenth Sabbath Offering. It will help

Story Tips

- Read more about Voya in the *Children's Mission* quarterly.
- Download other photos on Facebook: bit.ly/fb-mq.
- Download Mission Posts and Fast Facts from the Trans-European Division: bit.ly/TED-2023.
- This mission story illustrates the following objectives of the Seventh-day Adventist Church's "I Will Go" strategic plan: Spiritual Growth Objective No. 5, "To disciple individuals and families into spirit-filled lives," and Spiritual Growth Objective No. 7, "To help youth and young adults place God first and exemplify a biblical worldview." For more information, go to the website: IWillGo2020.org.

Mission Post

- The Seventh-day Adventist message was first preached in the Balkan Peninsula in 1880, when A. Seefried went to Skopje, in Macedonia, as a representative of the British and Foreign Bible Society.
- Petar Todor was the first Seventh-day Adventist minister born in Yugoslavia to work in his own country. He and his wife were baptized in Arad, Romania, in 1900. Three years later, at a conference in Cluj, Romania, he was chosen to serve as a Bible worker and the following year was sent as a pastor to Serbia.

build a new Pathfinder camp in their homeland of Montenegro where Voya's little sister and other children will be able to learn about the wonderful God who answers prayers. Thank you for planning a generous Thirteenth Sabbath Offering.

By Andrew McChesney

Saved by a Dog



MONTENEGRO | July 8

Sekule

The elderly father glared at the 21-year-old Seventh-day Adventist who had stopped at his apartment for a Bible lesson.

His 16-year-old son wasn't home to receive the sheet of paper with the Bible lesson in Montenegro's capital, Podgorica.

"This is my only begotten son," the father told Sekule. "I don't have anyone in my life except for him. I waited for him all my life. I want to know something about you. Are you from a sect?"

Sekule wanted to tell the man that he was not part of a sect but a Seventh-day Adventist. However, he was scared.

"We aren't a sect," he said. "We are Christians who believe in Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit, and we just want to help your son understand the fundamental beliefs of the Bible. Your son won't learn anything wrong."

"I don't want him to join a sect," the father said.

Then the father uttered a threat that made Sekule's blood run cold.

"If anyone takes my son in the wrong

direction, I'm ready to kill him and defend my family," he said.

It was the 1990s, and freedom was in the air after the former Soviet Yugoslavia had broken up into a number of smaller countries, including Montenegro. Sekule and other Adventists were using their freedom to distribute Bible studies in the capital.

After the angry encounter, Sekule wrestled with God for a week. He was worried about what would happen when he returned to the apartment. His fears grew daily. On the sixth day, he knelt before God and said, "I am deadly afraid. I don't know what will happen. The only solution is not to return to the apartment, but that isn't a solution because I have promised the son to go there. I need something special from You. Please help."

The next day, he repeated the prayer, took Bible lessons, and left his home to distribute them. As he walked to the first apartment, he passed through a park that was home to a pack of stray dogs. The biggest dog left the pack and followed Sekule.

"Go!" Sekule told the dog. "Go away!"

The dog took a few steps back but then followed again.

The dog awaited in front of the first apartment building that Sekule visited. Then the dog followed him to the next. When Sekule came to the apartment building of

the suspicious father, the dog followed him up the stairs. This was the first time that the dog had followed him into an apartment building. Sekule realized that God must be trying to encourage him.

"With that dog, why are you scared?" God seemed to be saying. "I'll send an angel to protect you if you need it. This dog is visible evidence of My presence. What you cannot see is My protection of you."

Sekule felt encouraged.

When Sekule and the dog arrived at the door of the apartment, Sekule said again, "Go away! Go away!"

The dog took three steps back down the stairs and looked up at him.

Sekule rang the doorbell.

The father opened the door. When he saw Sekule, he grew furious. He roared, "But you are—" Then he saw the dog and took a step back. Taking a breath, he said in a calmer voice, "My son has decided not to take the Bible lessons anymore."

When Sekule left the building, the dog walked off in the opposite direction. Sekule never saw the dog again.

About 10 years passed, and the son became a famous singer in Montenegro. Once, in a media interview, he spoke about his faith. He said, "I'm a real believer, but there are some things that I believe differently than our traditional religion."

When Sekule heard those words, his heart filled with joy. He knew God had used the Bible lessons for His glory.

Sekule does not know what happened to the son. He no longer sings or lives in Montenegro. But Sekule knows one thing: God protects those who share the gospel. ☽

Part of this quarter's Thirteenth Sabbath Offering will help build a new Pathfinder camp in Sekule's homeland of Montenegro where children and young people will be able to learn about God. Thank you for planning a generous Thirteenth Sabbath Offering.

By Andrew McChesney

Story Tips

- Pronounce Sekule as: sek-OO-le.
- Pronounce Podgorica as: POD-gar-itsa. The name means "under the hill."
- Download photos on Facebook bit.ly/fb-mq.
- Download Mission Posts and Fast Facts from the Trans-European Division: bit.ly/TED-2023.
- This mission story illustrates the following objectives of the Seventh-day Adventist Church's "I Will Go" strategic plan: Mission Objective No. 1, "To revive the concept of worldwide mission and sacrifice for mission as a way of life involving not only pastors but every church member, young and old, in the joy of witnessing for Christ and making disciples"; Spiritual Growth Objective No. 5, "To disciple individuals and families into spirit-filled lives"; Spiritual Growth Objective No. 6, "To increase accession, retention, reclamation, and participation of children, youth, and young adults"; and Spiritual Growth Objective No. 7, "To help youth and young adults place God first and exemplify a biblical worldview." For more information, go to the website: IWillGo2020.org.

Fast Facts

- One of the oldest trees in Europe is located in Bar, on the shore of the Adriatic Sea, and is more than 2,000 years old. The circumference of the ancient olive tree is about 33 feet (10 m).
- Lake Skadar is the largest lake in the Balkans and is one of the biggest bird reserves in Europe. It is home to more than 270 bird species and is an important stop for migrating birds. Visitors can see dalmatian pelicans, pygmy cormorants, storks, egrets, ibises, herons, and falcons.

Online Missionary



SERBIA | July 15

Nemanja

One young man wrote that his life was being threatened by an evil spirit. The evil spirit, who identified himself as a god, said that he had killed other people.

"Can you pray for me?" the young man asked Nemanja.

Nemanja organized an online prayer group of 10 people, and they prayed. Two days later, the young man wrote to express his gratitude.

"Yesterday, the spirit's attacks were less, and today he hasn't attacked at all," he wrote.

The young man has joined one of Nemanja's online Bible study groups.

"God has helped him," Nemanja said.

Another of Nemanja's Bible study groups, a group for women, received a message from a woman named Tamara in Vienna, Austria. She wrote that she strongly desired to take part in a Communion service but didn't know where to go. After posting her message to the group, she wrote directly to Nemanja to ask which church to attend. "That's easy," Nemanja wrote back. "Read the Bible and pray, and God will tell you what to do."

Tamara replied politely that she had already read the Bible and prayed.

Nemanja sent study materials and several of his Instagram posts.

"Thank you," Tamara wrote. "But I still haven't found an answer."

She asked for help a third time.

This time, Nemanja replied, "I suggest that you go to a Seventh-day Adventist church."

Tamara wasn't satisfied with the answer and decided to visit another church. When she arrived, however, she couldn't find a place to park. She drove around in circles but still couldn't find an empty spot. As she

As Nemanja was scrolling through Instagram, he noticed that he couldn't find many pages with the Seventh-day Adventist message in his native language, Serbian.

He wondered, "Why isn't our church well represented on Instagram?"

Then he asked himself, "Why doesn't somebody do something about it?"

The next question that came to his mind was, "Why don't I do something about it?"

So, Nemanja began an online ministry that today has more than 5,000 Instagram followers around the world and additional participants on two other social media platforms. In addition to posting messages about Adventist beliefs on social media, Nemanja oversees 10 small Bible study groups of 20-30 people each on Instagram. At least 10 young people have been baptized over the past two years, and several are studying to become pastors at the Adventist seminary in Serbia's capital, Belgrade.

What is it like to be an online missionary? It can be scary, said Nemanja, who is 25.

circled the church in Austria, an Adventist woman located about 300 miles (500 kilometers) away in Bosnia and Herzegovina noticed Tamara's initial post seeking help in the women's Bible study group.

"Hey Tamara," the woman wrote. "There will be a Communion service on Saturday. Here is the address to the church in Vienna."

Tamara was shocked. "I was searching for a parking spot and feeling really low," she wrote back. "It was at this moment that I received your message."

She went to the Adventist church for Communion that Sabbath. Now she is preparing for baptism.

One night, as Nemanya was preparing to go to bed, the thought came to him, "You should pray for Aleksa." Aleksa had accepted the truth after joining an online Bible study group but had not been baptized. Then he had left the group, saying, "I know the truth, but I don't want it. I want to live life."

Nemanya decided to pray that night. He prayed a very simple prayer. "Please, God, touch his heart. Amen," he said.

The next day, Aleksa wrote, "Listen, I feel like the Holy Spirit is touching my heart."

Nemanya was amazed. That was exactly what he had prayed for.

"It would have been nice if he had written, 'I want to come back to the group,'" Nemanya said. "But he wrote that he was experiencing exactly what I had prayed for. He returned to the group after that."

Another young man actively railed against Adventists on social media.

Nemanya wrote to him, "Hey, why don't you read *The Great Controversy*?"

"OK, I'll try," the young man replied.

He read the entire book by Ellen White in a single night. The next day, he said, "It looks like I'm becoming an Adventist."

He accepted that the Adventist Church teaches the Bible truth. Now he is preparing for baptism. 

Nemanya is a product of Seventh-day Adventist education funded by a Thirteenth

Story Tips

- Pronounce Nemanya as: ne-MAN-ya.
- Download photos on Facebook bit.ly/fb-mq.
- Download Mission Posts and Fast Facts from the Trans-European Division: bit.ly/TED-2023.
- This mission story illustrates the following objectives of the Seventh-day Adventist Church's "I Will Go" strategic plan: Mission Objective No. 1, "To revive the concept of worldwide mission and sacrifice for mission as a way of life involving not only pastors but every church member, young and old, in the joy of witnessing for Christ and making disciples"; Spiritual Growth Objective No. 5, "To disciple individuals and families into spirit-filled lives"; Spiritual Growth Objective No. 6, "To increase accession, retention, reclamation, and participation of children, youth, and young adults"; and Spiritual Growth Objective No. 7, "To help youth and young adults place God first and exemplify a biblical worldview." For more information, go to the website: IWillGo2020.org.

Mission Post

- With the formation of Yugoslavia at the end of World War I, the Yugoslavian Union Conference was founded in Novi Sad (Serbia) in 1925, and later transferred to Belgrade.

Sabbath Offering. As a teen, he studied at the Adventist secondary school in Novi Sad, Serbia, which opened with the help of a Thirteenth Sabbath Offering collected in third quarter 1997. Thank you for your Thirteenth Sabbath Offerings that have a ripple effect on many lives, spanning many years.

By Andrew McChesney

Reluctant Seminary Student



SERBIA | July 22

Stanislav

After giving his heart to Jesus as a teen, Stanislav became very active in his home church in Serbia. He preached many sermons, but the thought never entered his mind to become a pastor.

Then the church pastor suggested that he go to a month-long retreat called, “One Month for Jesus.”

Stanislav didn’t want to go. The event was for young people, and he was close to 40 years old. He shook his bald head. But the pastor wouldn’t take no for an answer.

“It will be interesting,” the pastor said.

“No, I don’t want to go,” Stanislav said.

“If you don’t want to go for yourself, go for the church,” the pastor said.

So, Stanislav went.

To his chagrin, only one person was older than him at the retreat. He struggled to fit in with the young people. But a pastor took an interest in him.

“You should go to our Adventist seminary in Belgrade,” the pastor said.

“No, I’m old,” Stanislav said. “Besides, I

haven’t gone to school in years. I’ve forgotten how to write.”

But the pastor was very persuasive. He was so passionate in his appeal that he and Stanislav even wept together.

“OK,” Stanislav finally said. “But if I go to the seminary, I’ll lose my job. I don’t have the money to pay for tuition, and I have no savings.”

“God will take care of that,” the pastor said.

Stanislav promised to pray and fast — and he did.

Immediately, things started to happen. As Stanislav backed up his car at the retreat, another car hit him. He thought, “You know, maybe this is a sign to go to the seminary.”

Then he played a game of soccer with the young people. As he went for the ball, he ran into a tree. Blood splattered everywhere. He thought, “Maybe this is a second sign.”

As he was resting later outdoors, something fell into his eye, causing it to swell shut. He thought, “This is definitely a sign. I just need to get a little better, and then I will go.”

Then he went deaf in one ear.

He prayed, “OK, God. This is Your will. I should go. I won’t even wait for the retreat to end.”

At that moment, Stanislav sensed a voice ask, “Would I do this to you?”

He thought, “That’s a good point. Even if it were God’s will for me to go, He probably wouldn’t do it this way.”

He stayed at the retreat. Afterward, he went to the seminary. But he wasn’t convinced that he was pastoral material. He thought, “Probably, I will fail the admission test.”

But he passed it.

Then he thought, “Fine, but I’m sure that I will fail the in-person interview when they question me about my life and motives.” He prayed, “God, please take this cup away from me. But Your will, not mine, be done.”

Stanislav passed the interview and was admitted into the seminary.

Stanislav didn’t have enough money to cover the tuition. He hadn’t received good marks in high school, and he was sure that no one would contribute to his financial needs.

But to his surprise, money flowed into his account as he earned straight A’s. He didn’t know where the money was coming from, but it always covered his expenses.

Exams were particularly scary. During his first year, Stanislav was particularly worried about a theology exam. He simply didn’t have time to prepare for it after he was asked to do his own work on campus and the work of several students who had left earlier. Stanislav only managed to study a third of the theology materials.

He prayed, “God, You know I didn’t do this on purpose. I’ve done the best that I could do. I need help.”

When he sat down to take the exam, he found that all the questions were based on the materials that he had studied! He easily passed the exam.

That day was a turning point for Stanislav. He realized that he needed to stay at the seminary and study.

Stanislav went on to become one of the first seminary students to receive a full scholarship.

Story Tips

- Download photos on Facebook: bit.ly/fb-mq.
- Download Mission Posts and Fast Facts from the Trans-European Division: bit.ly/TED-2023.
- Elements in this mission story illustrate the following objectives of the Seventh-day Adventist Church’s “I Will Go” strategic plan: Spiritual Growth Objective No. 5, “To disciple individuals and families into spirit-filled lives”; Spiritual Growth Objective No. 6, “To increase accession, retention, reclamation, and participation of children, youth, and young adults”; and Spiritual Growth Objective No. 7, “To help youth and young adults place God first and exemplify a biblical worldview.” For more information, go to the website: IWillGo2020.org.

Fast Facts

- Serbians played a major role in the first moon landing. Three Serbians took part in the Apollo project. In addition, a Serbian named Mihajlo Pipin was among the founders of the National Advisory Committee for Aeronautics (NACA), which later became NASA.

When the once-reluctant seminary student spoke with Adventist Mission, he was just weeks away from his graduation.

“From being a bad student, I’m now getting straight A’s, which is pretty good,” the 41-year-old says. “God is working. I couldn’t have done it without Him.” 

Thank you for your Thirteenth Sabbath Offerings three years ago that helped open a new church in the greater metro area of Belgrade, Serbia, where Stanislav attended the seminary.

By Andrew McChesney

New Way to Find a Wife



POLAND | July 29

Zbigniew

Zbigniew began praying in earnest for a wife when he finished his seminary studies in Communist Poland. He felt that if he were to be a good pastor, he really needed to have a good wife.

Shortly after graduation, church leaders sent Zbigniew and a dozen other graduates to southeastern Poland to knock on doors. The southeastern region was far from Zbigniew's home in the north. The young people were to seek to meet people's needs while offering Christian books and giving Bible studies.

Zbigniew and his friends fanned out two by two. They painted walls. They cleaned houses. Some people couldn't believe that they could receive free help. Every evening, the young people offered Bible studies.

One day, Zbigniew and his traveling companion, Jarek, knocked on the doors of houses in the town of Lesko. It was raining heavily. Dark clouds hid the sun, and a chill filled the air. Many people shut their doors.

After a few houses, a door opened and a woman of about 40 looked out.

"Who are you?" she said. "Why did you knock on my door?"

Zbigniew and Jarek explained that they were Christians and wanted to speak about Jesus.

"I'm getting ready to take a shower," the woman said. "I'll ask my husband if he wants to talk with you."

She shut the door just like her neighbors had done. Zbigniew wondered if she would come back. But she returned after several minutes.

"My husband doesn't feel well and doesn't want to talk," she said. "But I'd like to meet with you and hear more about Jesus. Can you come back?"

The young men agreed to return.

When they knocked on the door later, the woman invited them into her living room. About 10 people were seated there. They were eager to hear what the young men would say about Jesus.

Among the people in the room was a young woman named Maja. For some time, she had been reading the Bible on her own. She also had been praying for a good husband. Young men in her town smoked and drank, and she wanted a husband who was faithful to God and free from addictions. After the meeting, Maja said to the woman who had invited her, "Zbigniew will be my husband!"

A short time after the meeting, Zbigniew invited Maja to a Bible study in another city

about 60 miles (100 kilometers) away. She went, and the two began to correspond by mail. The year was 1986, well before the advent of cellphones and email.

The next year, in 1987, evangelist Mark Finley held evangelistic meetings in the northern port of Gdansk, and Zbigniew invited Maja to attend. Every evening, she joined 1,200 other people to hear about Jesus in a packed movie theater. At the last meeting, Maja decided to give her heart to Jesus in baptism.

The next year, in 1987, evangelist Mark Finley held evangelistic meetings in Gdansk, a city known for worker strikes and the Solidarity trade union. Zbigniew invited Maja to attend the meetings. Every evening, she joined 1,200 other people to hear about Jesus in a packed movie theater. At the last meeting, Maja decided to give her heart to Jesus in baptism.

Today, Zbigniew and Maja have been married for 35 years and have two adult daughters, Maja and Natale. Zbigniew is not only a pastor but also a seminary teacher, church leader, and regular speaker on Hope Channel Poland. He marvels at how God answered his and Maja's prayers to find a good spouse.

"My family came from the far north of Poland, and my wife came from the far south," he says. "It would have been impossible to meet without divine intervention."

He credits literature evangelism for playing a key role in their marriage.

"I always tell young students at the seminary, 'You have to be very careful when you go door to door because you just might find a wife!'" he says. 

Thank you for your Thirteenth Sabbath Offering in 2017 that helped build a television studio for Hope Channel Poland. Zbigniew is a regular speaker on Hope Channel Poland, the local affiliate of Hope Channel International.

By Andrew McChesney

Story Tips

- Pronounce Zbigniew as: zz-BIG-ni-yev.
- Pronounce Jarek as: YAR-ik.
- Pronounce Maja as: MY-uh.
- Know that the photo on the opposite page shows Zbigniew Makarewicz with his wife, Maja.
- Know that in addition to appearing on Hope Channel Poland, Zbigniew is the director of Global Mission at the Polish Union Conference; a teacher of theology and tourism at the seminary, the Polish Senior College of Theology and Humanities; and an editorial committee member at the Polish Publishing House. His former traveling companion Jarek is Jaroslaw Dziegielewski, president of the West Polish Conference.
- Visit the website of Hope Channel Poland (in Polish) at: hopechannel.pl.
- Download photos on Facebook: bit.ly/fb-mq.
- Download Mission Posts and Fast Facts from the Trans-European Division: bit.ly/TED-2023.
- This mission story illustrates the following objectives of the Seventh-day Adventist Church's "I Will Go" strategic plan: Mission Objective No. 2, "To strengthen and diversify Adventist outreach ... among unreached and under-reached people groups," and Spiritual Growth Objective No. 5, "To disciple individuals and families into spirit-filled lives." For more information, go to the website: IWillGo2020.org.

Mission Post

- In 1888 J. Laubhan, a Seventh-day Adventist worker, and H. Szkubowicz moved from Crimea to eastern Poland. Their three years' work there resulted in the first Adventist church in Poland.



A School for Berta

Berta

Berta was excited when she heard that the first Seventh-day Adventist church school had opened in Poland.

She was a highly qualified teacher, and she was looking for work. She would love to teach children at a Seventh-day Adventist school.

But there was a problem. The Adventist school was located near Poland's capital, Warsaw, and far away from her home in Krakow.

"This is not the job for me," Berta thought, sadly.

Then a friend unexpectedly started talking to her about the Seventh-day Adventist school.

"Maybe you could apply to teach there," the friend said.

"No, it's too far away," Berta replied.

It seemed more realistic to look for work in Krakow.

Then another friend told her about the Adventist school.

"I heard about this Adventist school," the friend said. "Maybe you would like to apply to be a teacher there."

After the second friend mentioned the Seventh-day Adventist school, Berta wondered whether God just might be trying

to tell her something about becoming a teacher there.

She prayed, "God, what should I do? Should I stay in Krakow, or should I go to the school?"

Berta decided to apply for two teaching jobs — at the public school in Krakow and at the Seventh-day Adventist school outside Warsaw.

She prayed again.

"I will go to the first school that replies to my job application," she prayed. "God, I will interpret it as Your will."

She wondered which school would reply first to her application letter. Would it be the public school, or would it be the Adventist school?

The Adventist school was the first to write back.

"Thank you for your interest in the teaching position," the reply said. "Please come in for a job interview."

Then Berta got worried.

She had a 16-year-old son named Jacob. All of his friends were in Krakow, and his school was in Krakow. Would he be willing to move to another place? It was

very important to Berta that Jacob accept her decision to leave their home and move across the country.

Berta prayed again.

She decided to give Jacob the option of staying with a relative in Krakow or going with her to the new school.

Jacob didn't hesitate.

"Mother, let make the move together," the boy said. "Let's go together. I want to be with you."

Berta was surprised and pleased. For her, his words seemed like the latest indication that God was guiding her path. After all, two friends had spoken to her out of the blue about applying to the Adventist school. Then the Adventist school had beat the public school in replying to her application for a job. Now her teenage son was willing and happy to move with her to a new home.

She took the job.

Today, Berta is the principal of the Seventh-day Adventist elementary school, which is located on the grounds of the Adventist Church's seminary outside Warsaw. She has no doubt that God led her to the school. Just the other day, her son declared that she had made the right decision. He said that he had not had any Adventist friends in Krakow and had not been interested in church activities. But now he has many Adventist friends and is active in the church.

"Mom, you made a good decision in coming here," he said. "I'm so glad that we are here."

Berta said she wouldn't have it any other way. God brought her to the school, and she is happy.

"That's why I am here," she says. 

Thank you for your Sabbath School mission offerings that help support Seventh-day Adventist education around the world.

By Andrew McChesney

Story Tips

- Know that the preschool and elementary school are located on the grounds of the Polish Senior College of Theology and Humanities in Pod Kowa Leśna, a commuter town about 25 miles (40 kilometers) from Warsaw. About half of the students come from non-Adventist homes.
- Know that the school sheltered and fed a number of Ukrainian refugees and taught their children during the armed conflict in Ukraine.
- Read more about the school on the Trans-European Union's website: bit.ly/Poland-school.
- Download photos on Facebook: bit.ly/fb-mq.
- Download Mission Posts and Fast Facts from the Trans-European Division: bit.ly/TED-2023.
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Mission Post

- In 1900, a German named H. Schmitz began preaching in Warsaw. Because he could not speak Polish, he went from house to house, reading the names on the doors. When he found a German name, he knocked. In only a few months, the first church was organized with German-speaking members.

A Sabbath Exit in Poland

photo: Tor Tjernsen/Adventist Media Exchange (CC BY 4.0)



POLAND | August 12

Ryszard

All university students attended Saturday classes in Communist Poland. But Ryszard didn't. Somehow he always managed to pass his classes. But then he got a new teacher.

"Give up your studies," a friend said. "We have a tough new professor who will not give you Saturdays off. Just pack your bags and go home."

Ryszard was not alarmed.

"No, I will not pack my bags and go home," he said. "First, I will pray to my Lord. I will explain my situation to Him and ask for His guidance."

As Ryszard prayed about meeting with the professor, two possible scenarios of what would happen came to his mind. In one scenario, the professor would reject his request to take off Sabbaths, saying, "It doesn't matter what you believe. You have to attend my class." In the other scenario, the professor would say, "Please be seated. I want to tell you something."

Ryszard went to the professor and

introduced himself. "I'm from the Seventh-day Adventist Church," he said. "The Seventh-day Adventist Church is a Protestant church. We believe in Jesus, Mary, and the disciples. We live like them. Saturday was a holy, sacred day for them, and it is for me, too. So, I'm afraid that I will not be able to attend your class on Saturday."

Ryszard waited quietly for the professor's response.

The professor said, "Please take a seat. Please listen to my story first."

The professor said that years earlier, he had flown to the United States for a one-year internship after graduating with his doctorate.

"I didn't know anybody there," he said. "When my plane landed, I thought, 'Where will I stay?' To my surprise, a family picked me up at the airport and took me to their home. They invited me to live with them and eat their food. When I wanted to pay them, they refused."

The professor lived with the family for the entire year.

"When I left to return to Poland, I thought, 'How can I pay back these people? How can I show my appreciation for what they have done for me?'" the professor said. "I had absolutely no idea what I could do. Now I hear you saying that you are a Protestant. They were Protestant, too. I will give you Saturdays off."

Ryszard was stunned and amazed by the wonderful news. Who would have thought that God would have sent a Protestant family to his future professor in the United States to pave the way for him to keep the Sabbath as a Seventh-day Adventist in Communist Poland years later?

Ryszard's friend was wrong. The professor did give him Saturdays off.

Ryszard never had to attend the class on Saturday. When he took the final exam, the questions were so simple that it seemed that the professor had gone out of his way to make sure he would pass the class.

Today, Ryszard Jankowski is the president of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Poland. He has never forgotten how God helped him keep the Sabbath at the university.

"I saw how God leads us even when we are stuck in a situation that seems to have no exit," he says. "Jesus says, 'I am the door through which you can always find an exit in difficult situations.'

In John 10:7-9, Jesus says, "Most assuredly, I say to you, I am the door of the sheep. All who ever came before Me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not hear them. I am the door. If anyone enters by Me, he will be saved, and will go in and out and find pasture" (NKJV). 

Thank you for your Thirteenth Sabbath Offering in 2017 that helped build a television studio for Hope Channel Poland. Ryszard is a regular speaker on Hope Channel Poland, the local affiliate of Hope Channel International.

By Andrew McChesney

Story Tips

- Pronounce Ryszard Jankowski as: ri-TSARD YAN-kov-ski.
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Fast Facts

- The name "Poland" ("Polska" in Polish) is derived from the tribe name Polanie, meaning "people living in open fields."
- The city of Warsaw was almost completely destroyed during World War II and was rebuilt using Bernardo Bellotto's 14th-century paintings as a visual guide. So, the city today looks more like a 14-century than a 20th-century town.
- In Poland, surnames are gender dependent. A baby boy will be given a surname that ends with "-cka/-cki" and a baby girl, "-ski/-ska". For example, if your father's last name is Kowalski and you are a girl, you will have Kowalska as your last name.
- Known as the "Mother of Modern Physics," Marie Curie was born Marie Skłodowska in Warsaw. Together, she and her French husband, Pierre Curie, discovered radium and polonium. She was not only the first woman to win a Nobel Prize, but she also was the first person and the only woman to win the Nobel Prize twice and is one of only two people, and the only woman, to win the Nobel Prize in two scientific fields.
- Polish engineer Ignacy Lukasiewicz invented the first modern streetlamp in 1853. A street in Warsaw still uses the very same lamps that Lukasiewicz made.

Setting Prisoners Free

photo: Tor Tjernsen/Adventist Media Exchange (CC BY 4.0)



POLAND | August 19

Ryszard

Christopher was very disappointed when he went with his wife to an evangelistic meeting in Poland. His wife had told him that the preacher always showed a short video as part of the presentation, but this time he didn't. Christopher was very upset.

At home, he shouted curses at his wife. It was the last straw for her. "Tomorrow, I will leave and take the children," she said. "This house has never heard anything positive from you." Before going to bed, she looked pitifully at Christopher. "I have never heard you pray," she said. "Why don't you pray to God? Only He can change your heart."

Christopher cursed his wife and went to bed. But he couldn't sleep. Later that night, he got up, went to the kitchen, and started to talk to God. "I don't know if You exist, but I'm a very bad person," he said. "I hurt my dear wife and my children. I drink alcohol. I don't want to live like this. Can you help me?"

He spoke to God for 30 minutes. But he didn't hear a reply.

In the morning, Christopher took the bus

to work. On the bus, he met friends, and they started talking. They always used profanities, and this was no exception. But for the first time Christopher didn't like their language. He wondered what was wrong with him.

At work, Christopher and his coworkers pooled their money as usual for drinks after work. But Christopher didn't drink this time. Instead, he went straight home "Lord, stop my wife from leaving," he prayed.

At home, his wife had packed three suitcases and was ready to leave with the children. "Honey, give me one more chance," Christopher said. "Can we have a new start?"

She stopped. "OK, I will give you one more chance," she said.

The next day, Christopher went to the preacher at the evangelistic meetings. Between puffs on a cigarette, he said, "I want to be baptized. My wife plans to be baptized on Friday, and I want to join her."

The preacher knew that if he refused, Christopher probably would never ask to be baptized again. He prayed silently, "Lord, what would You do if Christopher asked You?"

"I know that I'm smoking," Christopher said. "But I promise that I'll quit on Friday."

On Friday, Christopher said, "Pastor, I haven't smoked since getting up this morning."

The preacher wondered what to do. He wondered what church members would think. He decided to take a risk. He baptized Christopher with his wife.

The preacher wondered what would happen next. He didn't have long to wait.

Not long afterward, Christopher confided that he had gotten into trouble with the

law as a young man. He said he wanted to witness to other young men in prison.

The preacher had been born into a Seventh-day Adventist family and had never had any contact with young prisoners. He didn't know how what to do.

"Don't worry," Christopher said. "I can ask the prison warden for permission to visit."

"OK, I'll go with you," the preacher said. Silently, he prayed, "Please help me. I don't know how to act around prisoners."

The prison warden spoke firmly and directly. "You have one chance," he told the preacher. "If your sermon is boring and someone tells you to stop, you can't come back."

The preacher prayed even more. "Lord, this is a hard challenge," he said. "Help."

On the day of the sermon, young men wearing identical clothing filed into the room. They looked bored. The preacher sensed that he needed to change his sermon immediately.

"Friends," he said, "do you know why I came here?" He pointed to Christopher. "Because this man was like you when he was a teen. Christopher, can you come up?"

Christopher stood up. "Friends, I understand you," he said. "I lived here. I wasn't the best teen. I've done some pretty bad things. I once tried to escape from this very prison and look at this" — he stretched out his wrists to show scars where he had tried to commit suicide. "But, praise the Lord, someone saved my life. Today, I came to share good news. When you are released from prison, you can do what you were doing before, or you can change your life and live for God. I invite you to choose God."

After that day, Christopher and the preacher visited the prison many more times. A Polish television crew even followed them in, and the young prisoners told the crew, "We are so thankful to the Seventh-day Adventists for visiting us. They brought the Bible to us. We never had the Bible before. We are learning about Jesus, salvation, forgiveness, and the opportunity to start a new life." The prisoners' words filled Christopher and the preacher with joy.

Story Tips

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Mission Post

- During World War II, occupying German authorities closed the Polish Union and prohibited Adventist activity. All church property was confiscated, and Sabbath worship often was held in secret.

"This was very important to us," says the preacher, Ryszard Jankowski. "God can give us a new life. It doesn't matter what you have done. God gave Christopher a new life, and He can give you a new life, too." 

Thank you for your Thirteenth Sabbath Offering in 2017 that helped build a television studio for Hope Channel Poland. The preacher in this story, Ryszard Jankowski, is today the president of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Poland and is a regular speaker on Hope Channel Poland, the local affiliate of Hope Channel International.

By Andrew McChesney

Testing Father, Testing God

photo: Tor Tjernsen/Adventist Media Exchange (CC BY 4.0)



POLAND | August 26

Ryszard

A father was driving across Poland with his teenage son, Tomasz, at night.

As they traveled, the father spoke about the amazing experiences that he had had with God on the road.

"When I'm driving my car and something happens so that the car breaks down, God usually helps me," Father said. "A mechanic comes to the rescue, or someone stops their car to help me, or my car breaks down near a garage with a mechanic."

Tomasz listened to his father with no visible reaction on his face.

After a while, the father and son stopped at a filling station.

When Father tried to restart the engine, it didn't work.

Now Tomasz had a visible reaction on his face.

He smiled.

"Look, Father," he said. "Now we can test what you said. Does God really help you when you have car trouble?"

Father went to the woman in charge of the

filling station.

"Do you have a mechanic available?" he asked.

"Are you kidding?" the woman replied. "It is 11 p.m. Book a room in a hotel, and try in the morning."

Father shook his head.

"No," he said. "I need to show my son how God leads my life."

Father got out of the car and called a mechanic who had helped him with the car a week earlier.

The mechanic made an educated guess about what was wrong with the car. But Father couldn't understand his instructions about how to fix the car and, anyway, he didn't have any tools with him.

Tomasz got out of the car while Father was talking on the phone.

"Father," he said, "over there are a group of mechanics who have a problem with their car and are waiting for a spare part. Maybe they could take a look at the car."

"Call them," Father said.

The mechanics came over and fixed the car in five minutes.

Father was pleased.

“Tomasz, see how God works?” he said with a smile.

Then he thanked the mechanics, paid them, and gave them a book about God. The mechanics thanked Father and left.

Except one.

He stayed behind.

“I recognize you,” he said.

“Oh?” Father said. “Many people look alike. Maybe you’ve mixed me up with someone else who looks like me.”

“No,” the man insisted. “I recognize you. I saw you at an Easter program at the Seventh-day Adventist church.”

Father remembered the Easter program. He had helped lead the program. He had served as the youth director for the Adventist Church in Poland at the time.

“Yes, that was me,” Father said.

“I was a Seventh-day Adventist,” the man said. “But I’m not anymore.”

Father looked at the man with deep compassion on his face.

“It’s no coincidence that we are here and that I had a problem with my car so we could meet and talk,” he said.

Father prayed with the man and gave him a book about God.

Then they parted ways.

Father, whose full name is Ryszard Jankowski, doesn’t know what happened to the man.

“But I’m sure that God leads us in wonderful ways when we follow Him,” he says. 

Thank you for your Thirteenth Sabbath Offering in 2017 that helped build a television studio for Hope Channel Poland. Today, Ryszard Jankowski is the president of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Poland and is a regular speaker on Hope Channel Poland, the local affiliate of Hope Channel International.

By Andrew McChesney

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Fast Facts

- Poland is the biggest exporter of amber in the world.
- Pączki is a Polish pastry shaped in balls and filled with sweet fillings, similar to a jelly doughnut. Traditionally reserved for Fat Tuesday/Mardi Gras, some Christians would indulge in this treat in order to use up their eggs, milk, and butter before the Lent. Polish people eat millions of pączkis on this day alone.
- Mikolaj Kopernik, or Nicolaus Copernicus, was a Polish astronomer and a mathematician. His Heliocentric Theory was the first to propose that planets revolve around the sun and not the other way around.
- Pierogi is Poland’s version of dumplings and is one of Poland’s most recognizable dishes anywhere in the world.

From Drug Dealer ...



POLAND | September 2

Marek

He thought, "This is great. You have lots of money, and you get to party all the time!"

Two years passed. But then Marek couldn't find anyone to join him at a big party on New Year's Eve. It was a big holiday because the world was ringing in the year 2000. So, Marek, who was 21, decided to visit his grandmother.

That night, he found himself staring at a picture of Jesus in his grandmother's home. He thought, "Even if I don't believe in God, Jesus was real. He was here. This year, we are celebrating the 2,000th anniversary of His birth."

His thought drifted back to how he read the Bible as a boy. He remembered that the Bible depicted Jesus as a good person who treated people well. He thought, "Jesus was good. Am I good?"

At that moment, he heard a voice. It said, "Yes, you are good. You are as good as me."

To this day, Marek doesn't know who spoke. But the voice caused him to start to think seriously about the existence of God.

Several days later, Marek visited a woman who promised to reveal his future. She shuffled cards in her hands and warned about the end of the world. "This world is coming to an end," she said. "People have to pray. People have to convert."

Marek was astonished and asked when the world would end. She said in exactly one year. Marek believed her.

Around that time, Marek started to read the Bible because he wanted to know how the world would end. He thought Revelation would provide answers, but he read the

Matthew and Martin were Marek's best friends in school. If a fight broke out at school, the same three teens were always to blame: Matthew, Martin, and Marek.

Today, Matthew is dead; Martin spent for seven years in prison; and Marek is a former drug dealer who serves as youth leader of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Poland.

What happened?

Marek grew up in a Christian family in southern Poland. His life fell apart at the age of 18 when his girlfriend left him. He wanted to die. He stayed at home for two weeks, lying in bed and crying. Finally, he decided to pray, and he prayed, "God, I want her back." Nothing happened. Then he prayed, "God, I don't want to wake up anymore because it's so painful." Still, nothing happened.

Marek stopped praying and became an atheist. He started using drugs. Then his friend Martin decided to sell drugs and invited Marek to join him. Marek quickly became successful at selling and using drugs.

book three times and understood nothing. Turning to the gospels, he was amazed to learn that Jesus had a kingdom where people would be happy and live forever. He wanted to be in that perfect kingdom when the world ended. Between parties, he sought information about how to get into that kingdom.

One night, after a party, he was sitting in a car, eating takeout food with friends. Out the window he saw a bookstore called Signs of the Times. The name caught his attention. He remembered that Jesus had spoken about the signs of the times in the gospels, and he wondered if the bookstore could help him prepare for the end of the world.

The next day, he went to the bookstore and asked, “Do you have some books about Nostradamus?”

The woman behind the counter said, “No, but if you are interested in prophecy we have *The Great Controversy*.” It was an Adventist bookstore. Marek bought the thick book by Ellen White.

Marek was stunned as he read the story of the Christian church from the destruction of Jerusalem to Jesus’ second coming. He double-checked what he read in the Bible and online. Everything seemed to match up.

One night, as he read *The Great Controversy* in bed, he asked himself, “Am I gaining light from reading this book?” He had read in the book that Martin Luther gained light from God. Now, he wondered if he also was gaining light.

At that moment, the light bulb in the lamp above his head began to blink and make a buzzing sound. The bulb blinked and buzzed for 10 seconds, 15 seconds, 20 seconds. That was unusual, and Marek grew nervous.

Suddenly, he noticed a reflection of himself in a window on the other side of the room. All he could see was his head and the light bulb right above it. Exactly at that moment, the bulb stopped sputtering and shone brightly again. The answer was clear to him. He thought, “Yes, I have light like this bulb above my head.”

Story Tips

- As this mission story illustrates, *The Great Controversy* changes lives. Join the Seventh-day Adventist world church in the mass promotion and distribution of *The Great Controversy* in 2023 and 2024. Visit greatcontroversyproject.com for more information or ask your pastor.
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It was the first time in his life that he sensed God’s presence and love. He knelt and said, “God, if You are like this, I want to serve You.” 

Thank you for your Thirteenth Sabbath Offering in 2017 that helped build a television studio for Hope Channel Poland. Marek Micyk is the long-time youth leader of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Poland and a speaker on Hope Channel Poland, the local affiliate of Hope Channel International.

By Andrew McChesney

... To Adventist Leader



Marek's life began to change as he read *The Great Controversy* in Poland. He decided to keep the seventh-day Sabbath. He read that smoking is bad and decided to quit.

But he couldn't.

On a Saturday, he passed a street poster offering a five-day stop smoking class. The address was a Seventh-day Adventist church. Marek had never heard of the denomination before, even after reading *The Great Controversy* and visiting the Adventist bookstore where he had bought the book.

Marek went straight to the church. He saw a poster for *The Great Controversy* on the church bulletin board and knew that he had found the right place. It was 2 o'clock on a Saturday afternoon, and the church normally would have been empty after worship services. But a group of literature evangelists were staying at the church that weekend, and they invited Marek to return the next Sabbath morning to worship.

Marek came back the next Sabbath and enjoyed the sermon about Jesus. He was

POLAND | September 9

Marek

amazed at the kindness of the churchgoers. They told him that a large group of young people would meet in a nearby city the next Sabbath and invited him to go with them.

On the next Sabbath morning, Marek waited by a road for the Adventists to pick him up. It was a hot day, and he was wearing shorts and a T-shirt. He waited and waited. The Adventists seemed to have forgotten him. Then he sensed two voices speaking to him. One voice said, "Stay outside, and enjoy the nice weather." The other voice said, "Wait here because it's really important that you go to this meeting."

After a while the Adventists showed up and took him to a big meeting of 1,000 people. The worship service amazed Marek. Every word was meaningful to him. The preacher, a British pastor from London, spoke until noon. Then he said, "I know that I am supposed to end now, but I know that there is somebody here who needs Jesus."

Marek thought, "Who told him about me?"

The pastor then shared his personal story. He was born into a religious family but had left the church. He had used drugs and drank. His church and even his mother had stopped praying for him.

"Then I met Jesus," he said. "He took me up from the bottom where I was, and now I'm here to tell you about His power. And that He can change your life."

Then the pastor made his appeal. "If you want Jesus to change your life, just come here to the front," he said.

Marek saw 1,000 people in the crowd and

cringed at the thought of standing in front of them.

With the very next sentence, the pastor addressed his doubts.

“Don’t think about others looking at you,” he said. “Just come here. Come to the front. It’s between you and God.”

Marek stood up. He couldn’t sit anymore. His heart beat wildly as he went to the front. Other people joined me. As the pastor prayed, Marek understood the plan of salvation for the first time. He had lived a bad life, and Jesus had taken his place. Jesus had taken Marek’s place on the cross and released him. Jesus was saying, “You are free. You are free to have a place in My kingdom.”

Marek began to cry, and nobody could stop him. The tears flowed freely. But Marek also was excited and joyful.

The pastor concluded by saying, “As you go now for lunch, tell everyone what Jesus has done for you.”

Marek took the pastor’s words to heart. After the meeting, he ran from bench to bench and person to person on the city’s main street. “I have met Jesus!” he exclaimed. “He has changed my life, and I will be in His kingdom!”

From that day, when Jesus changed his life, Marek has wanted to engage in a work that changes other people’s lives. Today, he is the youth director for the Adventist Church in Poland.

“With my youth ministry today, I really feel that God has saved my life not only for His kingdom but also from physical death,” Marek said.

While he was studying at the Adventist seminary, he learned that his childhood friend Matthew was found dead with a knife in his heart. He had been using a lot of drugs, and no one knows what happened. He was only 23. His other childhood friend, Martin, who taught him to sell drugs, ended up in prison for seven years.

Marek said God has given him a new life.

“I really want to help young people find their purpose in life sooner than I did,” he

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said. “Maybe they will live better lives after hearing my story. I’m really thankful to God. He saved me from everything, and He gave me everything. So I have given everything to Him.” 

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By Andrew McChesney



No Way Out

Baiba

Sports was Baiba's passion. She gave everything for sports. She especially loved to play basketball, and she loved her coaches. Every time she participated in a match, she gave anything in hope of winning.

But when Baiba was preparing for baptism, she realized that she had to stop playing basketball. Many matches were scheduled on the Sabbath, and she wanted to honor God by keeping the Sabbath.

The 16-year-old girl faced a daunting task in her native Latvia.

Sports had been her life.

Now she needed to break the news to her coaches. It threatened to be painful. The coaches had been like parents to her, and they had invested much energy in training her.

She also would have to tell her teammates. She was not only part of the basketball team but also was the team captain. She understood that without her participation, the team would face big challenges on the basketball court.

Baiba prayed, "God, how will I tell them?"

There didn't seem to be any way out.

The teenage girl decided to play in one last match on the Sabbath.

At halftime of the match, Baiba found herself alone in the locker room. Her conscience was bothering her, and she fell on her knees.

"God, please do something," she prayed. "I don't want to play basketball anymore on the Sabbath. I want to follow You. But I don't know how to tell my coaches. It will be so painful for them. But I promise you that this will be my very last Sabbath game."

There didn't seem to be any way out.

After the prayer, Baiba didn't feel well. The coaches examined her and found that her blood pressure was exceedingly high at 200. Baiba was hospitalized.

After running a series of tests, a physician came to Baiba with startling news.

"You were born with only one kidney," he told her. "You cannot play basketball anymore."

Baiba couldn't believe her ears. God had provided a way out. She wasn't thrilled about having only one kidney. But now she could easily explain to her coaches and teammates why she had to quit basketball.

She broke the news to her coaches and teammates. They were sympathetic. They understood.

Baiba was glad that God had provided a way out, but she felt sad saying good-bye to sports. Sports had been her whole life.

Then she remembered that she had something better than sports. She had Jesus.

She prayed, “Jesus, please give me something new in my life because I cannot play sports anymore.”

Shortly after the prayer, a friend gave her a guitar to play. Baiba had never played the guitar before, and she practiced a few chords. It wasn’t too hard. After only one day of learning, she was able to play simple songs on her own. She was so excited! Jesus had blessed her with a gift of music.

Today, Baiba is 42 and still plays the guitar. While she no longer plays basketball, she has learned that she still can participate in other sports.

“Having one kidney didn’t end my sports life,” she says with a big smile. “I still can go skiing and do other sports.” ☽

This quarter’s Thirteenth Sabbath Offering will provide an opportunity for people in Latvia to play sports in a Christ-centered context. Part of the Thirteenth Sabbath Offering will help construct a building in Latvia’s capital, Riga, that will serve as a center of influence where families can engage in sports and participate in a health club. Thank you for planning a generous offering.

By Andrew McChesney



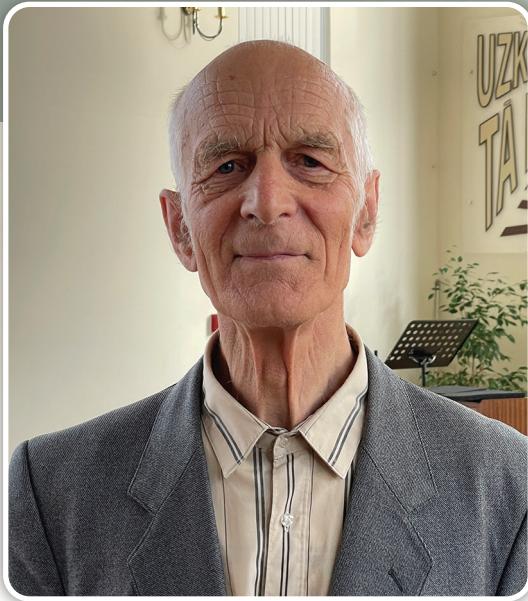
Story Tips

- Pronounce Baiba as: BYE-ba.
- Download photos on Facebook: bit.ly/fb-mq.
- Download Mission Posts and Fast Facts from the Trans-European Division: bit.ly/TED-2023.
- This mission story illustrates the following objectives of the Seventh-day Adventist Church’s “I Will Go” strategic plan: Spiritual Growth Objective No. 5, “To disciple individuals and families into spirit-filled lives”; Spiritual Growth Objective No. 6, “To increase accession, retention, reclamation, and participation of children, youth, and young adults”; and Spiritual Growth Objective No. 7, “To help youth and young adults place God first and exemplify a biblical worldview.” For more information, go to the website: IWillGo2020.org.

Mission Post

- The work in Latvia began in the mid-1890s when Gerhard Perk and several colporteurs entered several Baltic cities. In 1895, Perk began evangelistic work in Riga, the capital of Latvia, and on May 14, 1896, L. R. Conradi organized a church of 12 members there.
- The rapid growth of the church in Latvia in the first third of the 20th century was a result of active lay participation in evangelism. In a community where there was no regular minister, one church elder won a total of 37 converts.
- In the 1930s, an evangelist organized special youth Bible classes, a choral society, and an orchestra in Latvia. After four years of training, the young people participated in a countrywide evangelistic campaign. They toured the country providing music for evangelistic services and, at the same time, giving public concerts that provided more than enough funds for the expenses of the trip.

Faith Against All Odds



LATVIA | September 22

Armands

She had owned a large plot of land with two houses on it. One house was two stories tall with two apartments on each floor. The other one-story house had three apartments.

Anna loved God and the Seventh-day Adventist Church with all her heart. She believed that the Soviet regime would collapse one day and that God would restore the property to her. She thought, “How could I reclaim this property that once belonged to me and pass it over to the church?”

She discussed her desire with an Adventist pastor, but he didn’t see any way for her to give away something that wasn’t hers.

“Sister, nothing belongs to you now,” he said. “How can you give it away?”

But Anna trusted that times would change. If she didn’t live long enough to reclaim the property and hand it over to the church, then she would find someone who could help. She decided to write a will in which she would leave the property to a younger friend, Pauline.

In 1963, Anna signed a will leaving the property to Pauline on the condition that Anna transfer it to the Adventist Church. She also passed over the ownership papers to Pauline. The will was signed by a lawyer and two witnesses who were church members.

In reality, it was a fantasy document because it didn’t have any legal power. Under Soviet law, Anna didn’t own anything. The property, like all other formerly private property, had been nationalized. There was not even a hint that anything would change. Perestroika and glasnost were far away. But the two witnesses together with Anna and the

The 95-year-old woman’s announcement surprised the Latvian pastor, Armands.

The woman, Pauline, told him that she wanted to turn a two-story house into a Seventh-day Adventist church in Latvia’s capital, Riga. Then she presented him with pre-World War II ownership papers for the building.

The year was 1991, and newly independent Latvia was preparing to restore private property rights. Latvian authorities were looking to return Soviet-seized property to people with ownership documents.

Pauline had just such papers. She had been holding onto them since 1972, when the building’s original owner, Anna, had made the dying wish that her former house be turned into an Adventist church.

Armands had never attempted to reclaim property before, but he was willing to give it a try. He thought, “Why not?”

The saga started after an Adventist woman named Anna lost her property when Latvia became part of the Soviet Union in the 1940s.

lawyer signed the document, confirming that Anna had owned the property at one time.

Anna didn't live to see her dream come true. She died in her 80s in 1972, nearly 20 years before Latvia gained independence.

Shortly after Latvia became independent in 1991, Pauline resolved to make good on her promise to Anna. Pauline was already 95, and she presented the will and ownership papers to Pastor Armands. The two witnesses who had signed the will were still alive and praying that Anna's dream would come true.

Armands agreed to help, and Pauline signed over a power of attorney to him. He needed to unwind the situation and explain to the authorities that the property belonged to Pauline.

It was quite a long process. Complicating matters, Pauline's own children and grandchildren, who were not church members, demanded that the property be kept in the family.

But in the end, Anna's dream prevailed. Pauline received ownership of the property and handed it over to the Adventist Church. The church gratefully accepted the generous gift and began holding meetings on the property. Construction was completed on a new church building on the property in 2004, four years after Pauline died at 104.

Armands is now 76 years old and retired. He lives in an apartment on Anna's old property. He loves to tell the story about how Anna and Pauline looked at the property with eyes of faith. "The faith of these two sisters is amazing," he says. ☺

Anna and Pauline had faith in God, and this quarter's Thirteenth Sabbath Offering will provide an opportunity to teach other people about faith. Part of the Thirteenth Sabbath Offering will help construct a building in Latvia's capital, Riga, that will serve as a center of influence with language classes and a health club. Thank you for planning a generous offering.

By Andrew McChesney

Story Tips

- Know that the full names of the people in this story are Armands Bērzinš, Pauline Auniņa, and Anna Terauds.
- Download photos on Facebook: bit.ly/fb-mq.
- Download Mission Posts and Fast Facts from the Trans-European Division: bit.ly/TED-2023.
- This mission story illustrates the following objectives of the Seventh-day Adventist Church's "I Will Go" strategic plan: Mission Objective No. 1, "To revive the concept of worldwide mission and sacrifice for mission as a way of life involving not only pastors but every church member, young and old, in the joy of witnessing for Christ and making disciples," and Mission Objective No. 2, "To strengthen and diversify Adventist outreach in large cities, across the 10/40 Window, among unreached and under-reached people groups, and to non-Christian religions." For more information, go to the website: IWillGo2020.org.

Fast Facts

- Ice hockey, followed by basketball, is the most popular sport in Latvia.
- The largest river in Latvia is the Daugava and has been used by Vikings, Russians, and other Europeans for trade, war, and conquest. With a total length of 634 miles (1,020 km), it is about 590 feet (180 m) across when it enters Latvia, winds through the country for 219 miles (352 km), and increases to around 2,460 feet across (750 m) before emptying into the Baltic Sea at Riga.
- Friedrich Wilhelm Ostwald is the only Latvian to ever win a Nobel Prize. The scientist won the prize in chemistry in 1909 for his work on catalysis, chemical equilibria, and reaction velocities.

Out of the Supernatural



13th SABBATH | September 30

Oleg and Svetlana

the car engine. Before she could even think about it, the engine shut off. She also heard the voice telling her to do other things.

Oleg didn't think much about the voice until it told his wife to kill him and their three children. Svetlana refused the order and sank into a deep sadness. For three days, she wanted to die. Oleg was scared, and he left with their children. Svetlana's mother called for an ambulance, and Svetlana ended up at a psychiatric hospital.

When Oleg saw the psychiatrist, he asked if his wife would ever be released from the psychiatric hospital.

"I cannot keep her because she is not insane," the psychiatrist said. "She doesn't need a hospital. She needs church."

Oleg was shocked. A Soviet psychiatrist was recommending Christianity?

Oleg and his family had no connections to any church. He wasn't sure what to do.

In desperation, Svetlana's mother asked an elderly woman at her workplace, "Do you know where I can find a Bible or talk to someone about God?"

The woman happened to be a Seventh-day Adventist. "Of course, I know," she said. "My pastor can speak with your daughter and give you a Bible."

When Svetlana was released, she and Oleg went to the pastor and described their situation.

The pastor had no doubt that evil forces were at work. "Pray, and God can deliver you," he said. "You also must come to church."

Svetlana and the children started going to church. In three months, she was baptized.

For Oleg, getting married meant more than gaining a companion and friend. It meant living with someone with fantastic powers.

He learned about his wife's powers when she offered relief from his constant headaches.

"Would you like me to put my hand on your head?" Svetlana asked.

Without waiting for a reply, she placed a hand on his head. Immediately, the headache vanished.

"Oh, that helped!" Oleg exclaimed with surprise.

After that, whenever Oleg had a headache, he knew where to go. He didn't know how Svetlana did it, but he wasn't worried. There were many things he didn't understand in Soviet Latvia. But the one thing that he knew for sure was that there was no God. Oleg had been raised in an atheist home, and he, like many people in atheistic Latvia, didn't believe in God.

But he did believe in unseen forces. Svetlana enjoyed reading magazines about the supernatural, and she had connections with an unseen force. Once, when Oleg was fixing the car, Svetlana heard a voice telling her to use her mental powers to turn off

Story Tips

- Pronounce Svetlana as: svelt-ANA.
- Download photos on Facebook: bit.ly/fb-mq.
- Download Mission Posts and Fast Facts from the Trans-European Division: bit.ly/TED-2023.

Oleg was relieved that his wife had found peace. But he wasn't convinced that there was a God or that he needed God. Sometimes he made fun of Svetlana and their children for praying. He also asked why they went to church every Sabbath.

"Come and see," Svetlana said.

Oleg finally went — and he liked what he saw. When the pastor offered to study the Bible together, he agreed. Then he gave his heart to God and was baptized. Later, all three of their children also were baptized.

"Now I am a pastor of the church," Oleg says. "I never thought that I would be a pastor." ☺

Oleg is more than a pastor. Since 1998, he has been an Adventist youth leader, working with Pathfinders and engaging children in campouts and other activities. Svetlana has worked closely at his side. Oleg will help oversee this quarter's Thirteenth Sabbath project in Latvia's capital, Riga, a center of influence where Pathfinders, children, and families can participate in language classes, sports, and other Christ-centered activities. Thank you for your generous offering today that will help this project and a youth camp for Pathfinders in Montenegro.

By Andrew McChesney

Future 13th Sabbath Projects

The Thirteenth Sabbath Offering next quarter will support two projects in the West-Central Africa Division:

- Seventh-day Adventist Nursing and Midwifery Training College, Asamang, Abrepo Tikese, Ghana
- Bilingual English/French elementary school, Bandjoun, Cameroon

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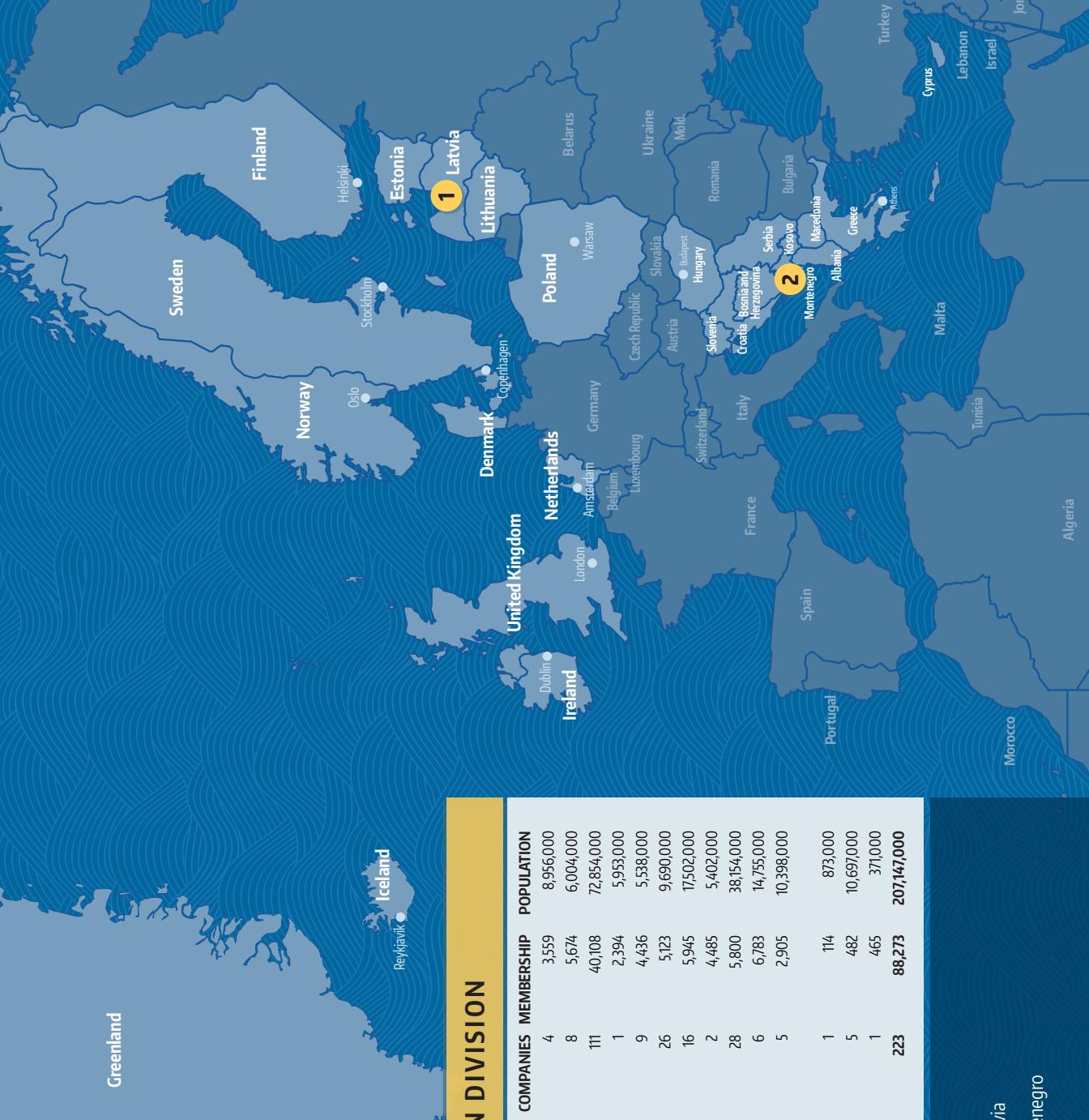
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TRANS-EUROPEAN DIVISION

CONFERENCE	CHURCHES	COMPANIES	MEMBERSHIP	POPULATION
Adriatic	88	4	3,559	8,956,000
Baltic	85	8	5,674	6,004,000
British	298	111	40,108	72,854,000
Danish	37	1	2,394	5,933,000
Finland	59	9	4,436	5,538,000
Hungarian	110	26	5,123	9,690,000
Netherlands	60	16	5,945	17,502,000
Norwegian	59	2	4,485	5,402,000
Polish	115	28	5,800	38,154,000
South-East European	210	6	6,783	14,755,000
Swedish	32	5	2,905	10,398,000
ATTACHED FIELDS				
Cyprus Section	2	1	114	873,000
Greek Mission	9	5	482	10,697,000
Iceland Conference	6	1	465	371,000
Totals	1,170	223	88,273	207,147,000

PROJECTS

- ❶ Center of influence, Riga, Latvia
- ❷ Youth camp, Zelenika, Montenegro