

# mission



FROM THE OFFICE OF ADVENTIST MISSION VOLUME 7 • NUMBER 3

## Return to Palau

Melissa meets the man who killed her missionary family when she was 10 years old.

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# EDITORIAL

Perhaps you've heard the story of the missionary family that was murdered in Palau in 2003 and of their 10-year-old daughter, Melissa, who was the sole survivor.

Although Melissa knew that she couldn't stay on the island after the deaths of her loved ones, she was still sad to leave. When

her grandparents, Drs. Itamar and Ruth DePaiva, came to take her to the United States, she told them that she wanted to return to Palau one day.

Through the years, Melissa never lost this desire. In 2018, fifteen years after leaving Palau, she made the journey back with her grandparents and her husband by her side.

Melissa's life story is featured on page 16 of this magazine. It's one of the most courageous stories of grace that I've ever read, and it's an honor for *Mission 360°* to share it with you.

**Laurie Falvo,**  
Editor



Melissa Gibson with her grandmother, Ruth DePaiva, who has taught her so much about forgiveness.

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From the Office of Adventist Mission

**Chairman:** G. T. Ng

**Editor in Chief:** Gary Krause

**Editor:** Laurie Falvo

**Contributing Editors:** Cheryl Doss, Kayla Ewert, Rick Kajiura, Elbert Kuhn, Andrew McChesney, Hensley Mooroooven, Teen Nielsen, Ricky Oliveras, Karen J. Porter, Claude Richli, Jeff Scoggins, Gerson Santos, Earley Simon, Karen Suvankham, John Thomas, Homer Trecartin, David Trim

**Editorial Advisors:** Petras Bahadur, Paolo Benini, Edison Choque, Jose Cortes Jr., Daniel Duda, Richard Elofer, Kleber Gonçalves, Johnson Jacob, MinHo Joo, Zakari Kassoule, Wayne Krause, Samuel Lumwe, Silas Muabsa, Paul Muasya, Umesh Nag, Denis Sand, Clifmond Shameerudeen, Wesley Szamko, Samuel Telemaque, Doug Venn, Amy Whitsett, Gregory Whitsett, Dmitry Zubkov

**Design:** 316 Creative

**Production and Digital Media:** Donna Rodill

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**12501 Old Columbia Pike**

**Silver Spring, MD 20904-6601, USA**

**Telephone: (301) 680-6005**

**Questions? Comments? Email us at [Questions@adventistmission.org](mailto:Questions@adventistmission.org).**

**VOLUME 7, NUMBER 3**

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# The 10-Kilometer Church Plant



**Ricky Oliveras,**  
Office of  
Adventist  
Mission

In Quito, Ecuador's capital city, a 10-kilometer race was just what an Adventist youth group needed to help them plant a church!

The idea originated in the home of Carolina, where friends regularly met for fellowship. Carolina, the leader of the church planting project, says, "We wanted to do more than just meet together and grow from each other's experiences. So, we decided to plant a church in an unentered part of our city."

The group's initial attempt to share Jesus didn't go well. "We knocked on people's doors and asked whether they wanted to study the Bible with us," Carolina says. "It was a bad idea! They said, 'No, we don't even know you. Who are you? What do you want?'"

The friends met again to pray about how best to connect with the people. "We decided to do a survey to determine their needs," says Maria, a member of the church planting team. "We discovered that many of them were experiencing health problems."

"We wanted to host a health fair with free medical consultations

and lab work," Carolina adds. "But it was going to cost around three thousand dollars, and we didn't have the money."

Every Wednesday, the friends went jogging as a group activity. One week, as they prepared for their weekly run, Carolina's mother suggested that they use their activity as a way to raise funds. "You could have a race," she said, "and charge a small registration fee." The group loved the idea and got busy planning.

On the day of the race, more than 950 people participated, providing enough money to conduct the health fair and rent a church building! The health fair and other outreach activities resulted in new friendships and new faces in church on Sabbath mornings.

Next to the church is a bakery owned by Noemi and Miguel. Sometimes during the week people from the church bought things from their store, and one day Noemi asked them about the church. They invited her to study the Bible with them the next Sabbath, and Noemi accepted. She

began attending church regularly, and as her faith grew, she prayed that Miguel would join her. Initially, he showed no interest, but after a few months, as a birthday gift, he agreed to join her for one Sabbath only.

"My first impression was that I didn't know anybody, but everybody knew me," Miguel says. "I felt an immense love."

Miguel wanted to learn more, so he and Noemi asked for Bible studies at home. Eventually, they gave their hearts to Jesus and were baptized. Their bakery is now closed on Saturdays, but business has doubled on Sundays!

"It's a radical change," Miguel says. "We used to have a lot of problems, but now it's different. We study together, go to church, sing, and pray to God."

Miguel and Noemi's family is just one example of those who have come to know Jesus, and they're excited to share what they've learned.

"We have a small group that meets in our house once a week," Noemi says. "Our goal as a family is to share God's Word so others can know Him too."

About 10 people have so far been baptized as a result of the young people's effort, and the church members pray that their efforts will continue to spread God's love throughout the community.



"I can see a difference in many of the people's lives, Maria says. "Before they used to live without purpose, without knowing what's going to happen tomorrow. Now they have the hope that Jesus is coming again, and they're sharing that."

"Our dream is that this church will grow and that we'll all see

each other in heaven," adds Anavelen, another member of the church-planting team.

Your donations have made it possible for Global Mission to help this church plant. Thank you for supporting church planting projects like this one in major cities of the world.

- 1 More than 950 people participated in the 10-kilometer race.
- 2 The youth group meeting in the home of Carolina, the leader of the church planting team.
- 3 When Miguel and Noemi decided to close their bakery on Sabbaths, God blessed them by doubling their sales on Sundays!
- 4 Maria, one of the church planters who conducted a survey to determine the community's needs.
- 5 Carolina leads a weekly Bible study in Miguel and Noemi's home.
- 6 Church planting couple Anavelen and Sebastian help children at the church plant learn about Jesus.

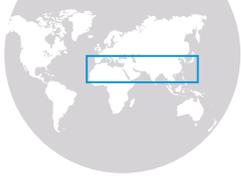


## GLOBAL MISSION

Please support Global Mission to reach those who don't know Jesus.

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# Not Too Much Masala

**Editor's note:**

This author served as a volunteer at a mission school in the 10/40 Window. She was initially an elementary teacher and dormitory dean for boys ages 7 to 11. Many of them were orphans whom she affectionately refers to as “her boys.” Later, after earning a teaching degree from Southern Adventist University, she taught high school classes to many of the same students. For the security of the project, all names have been changed.

**M**y whole heart feels warm. Like the sun is shining directly on it while I’m lying on the beach. It feels so happy, it could burst like a balloon with too much air in it, except instead of air, it’s full of love.” These childlike words are all I have to explain what I feel when memories of moments with my students wash over me like soft waves.

Moments like these:

I’m returning to the school after being away for two weeks. As I ride in the taxi, the motion from navigating the curvy roads combined with the strong smell of betel nut the men on either side of me are chewing is enough to make me feel sick. I look desperately for the village sign that is my cue to get out of the vehicle. From there, I’ll catch a ride to the mission school, which is even deeper in the jungle. I wonder who will pick me up, secretly hoping it will be one of “my boys.”

Finally, the taxi driver unties my bags from his roof, tosses them into my outstretched arms, and disappears in a cloud of exhaust. It’s then that I spot the campus vehicle that’s been waiting for me. One of my boys, Suban, is driving. But he’s not the only person in the car. Five other boys are smiling, waving, and clamoring out. Within moments, a small gang surrounds me. Muthu is pulling off my backpack. Songayai is grabbing the bags from my hands. And Naoton is asking, “What did you bring me, Miss?”

When we pile into the car, the boys’ voices climb above each other while each tries to update me on his life. Eventually, we decide to play Suban’s favorite song, “My Heart Will Go On.” I watch the boys’ goofy antics as they sing along, and I think I must be the most blessed girl in the world.

This fact is confirmed when, upon arrival, I discover the boys have cleaned my home. Word spreads quickly that I’m back, and more boys rush into my dining room. We spend the next hour laughing and catching up.

They tell me about a recent soccer match in the city, and I pretend to be fascinated. I tell them about my shopping experiences, and they comment, “Girls are like this only, going out and putting style.” The banter lasts until the girls shout my name from the adjacent hill, and I head over to greet them. On the walk, my heart feels full, and the stars glow brighter than usual in the night sky.

I’m sitting with Bimola while we grade papers. Suddenly she looks up at me and says, “Miss, I aim to do your job someday. Helping the students reach their goals and loving them lots. If I could be like you, I’d thank God so much.” I feel so humbled, and my whole heart hurts with warmth.

Little Andi is running across the yard with his ever-toothless grin, holding up his latest catch—a

- 1 Andi taking a mud bath during monsoon season.
- 2 Bimola, who started as my student grader and became family.
- 3 Suban taking a much-needed break on a hike.
- 4 Andi playing on my kitchen floor while I cooked, always doing something to make me laugh.

beetle. He’s shouting, “Miss, green color. Green color for you!” My heart is bursting at the seams.

The girls are piled all around me on the surrounding bunks. Eunice turns on her flashlight, shining it directly in my face. “Eunice, I’m blind.”

“Miss, sorry. I want to see your face when you tell the story. I feel so interesting in your face.”

I share the story of Tamar in Genesis, speaking of her pain and how her father-in-law was so unfair to her. It sparks a lively discussion about how being a strong woman for God is one of the best things we can be. The beauty, strength, and kindness of these girls are so palpable, I can feel it in my heart.

As I finish this article, Muthu sits next to me. He’s been reading over my shoulder. He says, “Miss, when writing, don’t add too much masala.” Masala, the local seasoning, adds taste to curry dishes. To my Muthu, who always comes up with creative ways to say everything, my recounting of these memories might sound like I’m overexpressing the way I feel. But I’m not adding too much. This fullness, this glowing, is the kind of love Jesus gave me. And when the kids are around me, the warmth is greater than anything I’ve felt on earth. Why did He choose to bless me with them? Who else will God give me to love? How much more glow can I feel?

1



2



3



4



Would you like to help make a positive impact in the lives of others? If so, please consider being a volunteer missionary through Adventist Volunteer Service which facilitates church members' volunteer missionary service around the world. Volunteers ages 18 to 80 may serve as pastors, teachers, medical professionals, computer technicians, orphanage workers, farmers, and more. To learn more, visit [AdventistVolunteers.org](http://AdventistVolunteers.org).



# The MYSTERY BOOK



**Melanie Wixwat**, the daughter of missionary parents, grew up in India. She is a news writer for the Middle East and North Africa Union Mission in Beirut, Lebanon.

**F**ourteen-year-old Anahita\* was bored one day and went to the bookshelf in her father’s library to find something to read. As she searched through the books, one in particular attracted her attention. It had a cross on it. When she asked her father what it was, he told her it was a Bible.

Anahita was surprised. She didn’t know much about the Bible. But she did know that the leader of the very conservative country in which they lived wouldn’t approve of their owning one. “Where did you get it? she asked hesitantly.

Anahita discovered that about a year before a stranger had handed the book to her mother at a nearby park. “I didn’t think too much about it,” her mother told her. “I set it on the shelf and eventually forgot it was there.”

Anahita curled up with the mysterious book and began reading a chapter in the Old Testament. But she didn’t get very far because the words were difficult to understand. She was tired, so she went to bed.

The next morning after a refreshing sleep, she tried to read the Bible again. This time, she started with the book of John and continued through the book of Revelation. She read nonstop for five hours!

Anahita couldn’t comprehend many things that she read, but what she did understand deeply touched her heart.

“I read many amazing things about God that day,” she said. “I

believed, I pled for forgiveness, and I told Him that I wanted to follow Him.” Anahita realized that she’d never known God’s true character. “I thought God was someone who would become angry and punish me if I sinned. Now, I knew that He was loving and kind.”

Anahita couldn’t sleep that night, and in the early morning hours she began to talk with God. “There are so many things in the Bible that I can’t understand, and because I live in this country, I won’t be able to get anyone to help me,” she lamented. She asked Him to help her and her family move to a place that allowed people to study His Word freely. She even mentioned a specific country where she thought she’d like to live.

Anahita told her parents that she wanted to study the Bible in a safe country, and they applied for refugee status in the very country she had asked God to move them to. Less than a year later, they were living there!

Anahita and her parents now attend an Adventist church, and Anahita attends a youth Bible study class led by a Global Mission pioneer who is working specifically with refugees from the country she left behind.

Please pray that God will grant miracles that will allow His work to flourish in the Middle East and North Africa and that He will provide a way for all those who are seeking Him to find Him.

\* Name has been changed.



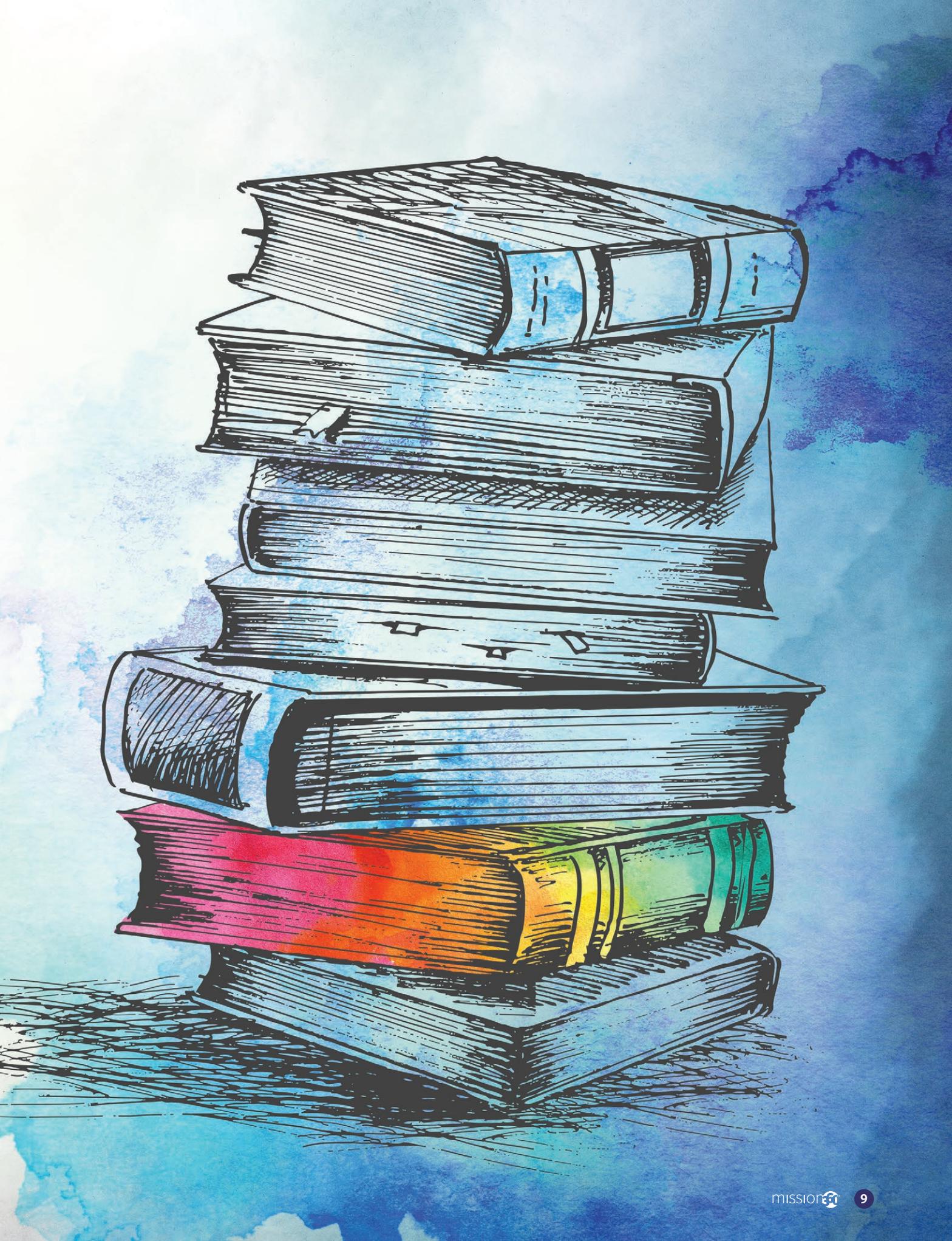
## GLOBAL MISSION

### Pioneers in the 10/40 Window

Global Mission supports thousands of local missionaries, called pioneers, in starting new groups of believers in the Middle East and other areas of the 10/40 Window where there is no Adventist presence. Their ministry wouldn’t be possible without your donations and prayers. Thank you for your support!

To donate, please visit [Global-Mission.org/giving](https://Global-Mission.org/giving), and select “Pioneers in the 10/40 Window.”

To see what’s happening in mission in the Middle East and North Africa Union Mission, visit [m360.tv/middleeast](https://m360.tv/middleeast).





# The Man with the GOLDEN TOOTH



Born in Russia, **Galina Stele** is the research and evaluation manager of the Office of Archives, Statistics, and Research.

In 1920, the General Conference sent a Canadian minister by the name of T. T. Babienco to China to supervise the Adventist Russian-speaking churches and scattered believers in Manchuria and Eastern Russia.<sup>1</sup> Babienco arrived in Harbin with his wife and two children and started enthusiastically working among the segment of the Russian population that had flooded Harbin, Manchuria, and its surrounding areas after the Russian revolution and civil war.

Babienco was a prominent leader and had many blessed experiences during his ministry in that region, including one occasion when he had to cross the border with the Soviet state to visit an Adventist church in the city of Vladivostok.<sup>2</sup> The congregation had some 200 members, and the building sometimes served as a meeting point for Babienco and the area pastors.

In view of the news that the border could soon be closed by the Soviet state, Babienco traveled to meet with these pastors to discuss church work in their region. Traveling with him was an assistant he called Brother Paul.

The two men boarded a train on a cold winter day, wearing heavy coats to shield them from the bone-chilling winds of Vladivostok. To protect the safety of their mission, they sat in separate cars and planned to stay only long

enough to preach the sermon on Sabbath and hold their meeting.

The train chugged slowly across the frozen landscape, and it was already dark when it stopped at the Soviet border. Within minutes, Babienco noticed a commotion and realized that a commissar and a patrol of soldiers had entered the car in which he sat. The commissar was dressed in a fur hat and a greatcoat and had a golden crown on one of his front teeth. He announced that they were looking for an American spy, and soon his eyes fell upon Babienco.

“Papers!” he ordered. Babienco handed the commissar his documents and prayed silently as the commissar reviewed them. “Bring your things, and follow the soldiers,” he ordered.

Babienco gathered his belongings and followed the soldiers to an empty boxcar standing on a reserved railway. It was in such cars that people were often interrogated and shot without a court investigation if it was decided that they were dangerous for the state.

When Babienco entered the car, a soldier emptied the contents of his pockets and suitcase onto a table. As the soldier did so, Babienco noticed a small piece of paper that he didn’t recognize. *Has someone put it on the table to accuse me of something?* he wondered.

One of the soldiers unfolded the paper, read it, looked intently

at Babienco, and silently passed it to the next soldier to read. Each man did the same until everyone had read the note. Suddenly, a man who appeared to be in charge handed Babienco his things and told him that he could go because they were looking for someone else.

At that moment, the commissar came in. He was furious to learn that the soldiers had let Babienco go. During the heated discussion that followed, Babienco waited calmly, praying for divine help. Finally, the commissar agreed to release him on the condition that he provide the address of where he would be spending the night. His Bible was confiscated.

Later that evening, the train finally rumbled into Vladivostok. Babienco and Brother Paul quickly made their way to the church, where they would stay in a guest room. The church guard had dinner waiting for them, and when he heard their story, he was concerned that the commissar knew where they were staying.

That night Babienco could hardly sleep. He kept thinking about that piece of paper. *What was written on it? Who had put it there?* Suddenly, he heard loud knocking at the door. It was the soldiers! They had come to arrest him and Brother Paul.

The guard knew some of the men, and he invited them to his room. The group talked and laughed together for some time, and then suddenly, as if they had forgotten why they came, the soldiers disappeared into the night.

The next day, Babienco and Brother Paul had their meetings at the church and returned home without further incident. The

The commissar had recognized that Babienco had peace in his heart that he didn't have.



T. T. Babienco with his wife, Anna, and daughters, Helen and Lida.

contents of that piece of paper remained a mystery for several years.

Before Babienco left China for a new mission field, he received permission to visit Vladivostok and went to say good-bye to the church members. While he preached on Sabbath, he noticed a man sit down by the door with his wife. After the service, the man approached Babienco to shake his hand. "Do you recognize me?" he asked.

"No, I'm sorry, I don't," replied Babienco. "But you do look vaguely familiar."

"Maybe it's because I no longer have my golden tooth," the man replied. Babienco was stunned as he remembered the man who had brought him to the boxcar for interrogation.

"I had it removed before my baptism," the man explained. "It was a symbolic way for me to say good-bye to my former life."

"Your baptism?" asked Babienco. "How did this happen?"

The former commissar told Babienco that he hadn't been able to forget how calm Babienco had been at the moment of his possible death at the Soviet border, and he also couldn't forget what was written on the small piece of paper. "That little note helped changed my life," he said.

"What note?" asked Babienco. The man opened the back cover of his Bible. There was a small,

old piece of paper, torn apart but glued to the inside cover. Babienco immediately recognized it: it was the note he had seen on the table.

As Babienco read the paper, he remembered that he had made the notes during one of his personal devotions. He must have placed it in one of the pockets of the heavy coat he wore on the train, and because he rarely wore the coat, he had forgotten all about it.

On the note, the following words were written:

- Read the Bible daily
- Pray always
- Live as if it is your last day on the earth
- Always be ready to meet your Lord

The man told Babienco that when the soldiers had failed to return with Babienco the night he stayed in Vladivostok, he had wanted to go to the church and shoot him. But he had been so affected by the words on that note that he couldn't follow through with his plan.

The commissar had recognized that Babienco had peace in his heart that he didn't have. He wanted this peace to be his so much that he started studying Babienco's confiscated Bible and attending the Adventist church, where he was soon converted.

On that day, the mystery of the small piece of paper was solved for Babienco. His experience reveals the long-lasting consequences of one Christian life fully dedicated to God. What about us? Do we live as if this were our last day on earth?

1 See Galina Stele and Aleksey Oparin's story "The Chinese Railway and the Gospel" about Pastor T. T. Babienco working in China in the 1920s in *Mission* 360° 6, no. 4 (2018), 20, 21.

2 This story was told to Aleksey Oparin by Babienco's daughter Lida B. Mann, who was born in Harbin in 1921. He published it in his book about Adventist pioneers, *Pobedivshie vremya* (Winners of the Time), which is posted in the Russian language at <http://soteria.ru/s3696/16/>.

Read more about Babienco in the new Encyclopedia of Seventh-day Adventists (ESDA), upcoming in 2020. To learn more about the ESDA, please email [encyclopedia@gc.adventist.org](mailto:encyclopedia@gc.adventist.org), go to [adventistarchives.org/encyclopedia](http://adventistarchives.org/encyclopedia), or follow ESDA on Twitter @EncyclopediaSDA.



# LIVING VERTICALLY

1



**Laurie Falvo,**  
Office of  
Adventist  
Mission

If you met Ana Maria today, you might have a hard time believing that not long ago, this vibrant woman was so stressed and depressed that she spent most of her time in bed.

Before Ana Maria became ill, she had joined a class to learn healthy cooking at a Life Hope Center, or urban center of influence, in Santiago, Chile. The class was taught by a One Year in Mission volunteer named Channi. The two women became friends, and when Channi moved to a new Life Hope Center to teach, she invited Ana Maria to attend the class there. But Ana Maria didn't come.

Channi was concerned about Ana Maria and often called her to

see how she was doing. Although Ana Maria never answered her phone, Channi didn't give up. She prayed earnestly for Ana Maria and sent her many messages.

One day, when Ana Maria was feeling a little better, she decided to look at her messages. "I couldn't believe how many I had from Channi," she said. "They were so loving and encouraging. As I read them, I felt like the most important woman in the world!"

Channi's persistent care deeply touched Ana Maria. The next time Channi called her, she answered her phone. She decided to go to a cooking class and enjoyed her experience at the center so much that she signed up for two language classes and a Bible class!

“Channi's notes were so loving and encouraging. As I read them, I felt like the most important woman in the world!”

One day, Ana Maria shared with Channi that she hadn't been sleeping well because of her depression and stress. Channi prayed with Ana Maria about the problem and invited her to start praying too. Ana Maria prays every day now, sharing her struggles with Jesus and seeking His help. She says she not only sleeps well now but feels a peace that she's never known.

Ana Maria is grateful for the ministry of the Life Hope Center and the One Year in Mission volunteers who serve there. And she no longer spends her days sleeping. "I feel like a different person," she says. "I've learned that God is with me and that He's guiding my life. I'm so happy now!"

The Lo Prado Life Hope Center is located in Santiago, the capital city of Chile. Its ministry, overseen by Pastor Abraham Cabezas, is supported by several One Year in Mission volunteers and the members and staff of the local Seventh-day Adventist church and school.

## Life Hope Centers

Adventist Mission supports wholistic mission to the cities. This includes a rapidly growing number of Life Hope Centers or urban centers of influence, that serve as platforms for putting Christ's method of ministry into practice. The centers provide an ideal opportunity for Total Member Involvement in outreach that suits each person's spiritual gifts and passions. To learn more about Life Hope Centers, please visit [MissionToTheCities.org](https://MissionToTheCities.org).

- 1 Ana Maria smiles a lot now.
- 2 Ana Maria with One Year in Mission volunteers Juno, Channi, and Claudy.



To watch more videos about Life Hope Centers, visit [m360.tv/uci](https://m360.tv/uci).





# Paying It Forward



**Michael Rohm** is a communications specialist for ADRA.

The first sound Fatima heard was a high-pitched whine directly above the schoolhouse where she worked as a teacher. She paused from her lesson and looked around at her students as they tried to identify the strange noise. It seemed to be growing louder. And then the bomb hit.

“A helicopter was dropping bombs on the school,” Fatima recalled. “Everyone just ran away.”

For two years, Fatima, her husband, and their young son, Ibrahim, endured the hardships of war. When it was no longer safe to go to school, Fatima stayed home. When it was no longer safe to stay home, the family gathered a few belongings and fled for the border of Lebanon.

Although there was peace in Lebanon, life was hard for the little family. They were thrilled to welcome a baby girl to their home, but the blessing of a newborn daughter didn't dispel the realities of poverty in a foreign country. Fatima needed a job to support her husband's meager income as a handyman. Work opportunities seemed out of reach, but Fatima prayed.

One day, a neighbor came to her door with an idea. “You tell us you were a teacher in Syria,” the neighbor said. “Come register your name at the ADRA Learning Center to see if they need help.”

Fatima had never heard of ADRA, the Adventist Development

and Relief Agency, but she went to the Learning Center to see whether they could give her a job.

Later that day, the community mobilizer called Fatima. “We don't need a teacher,” she said, “but we do need another community mobilizer—someone to help connect the refugee children with education and support. Would you be willing to work with us as a volunteer?”

Fatima needed money, but she also wanted to feel useful, serve others, and engage with her refugee community. She accepted the volunteer position, and in time, she became a paid ADRA employee.

“When we visit families, the people open their hearts and their minds because they know we're Syrians just like them,” she said. “We're all in the same situation.”

Nagi Khalil, the country director for ADRA Lebanon, knows the value of Syrians helping Syrians. “After years of war and hardship, the refugee population is not always open-minded to those who come knocking on their doors,” he explained. “They're more receptive to the message of education when it comes from a fellow Syrian.”

Spreading that message of education is exactly what the ADRA Learning Center is about. In a country where refugees make up



The Adventist Development and Relief Agency is the global humanitarian organization of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Through an international network, ADRA delivers relief and development assistance to individuals in more than 130 countries—regardless of their ethnicity, political affiliation, or religious association.

By partnering with communities, organizations, and governments, ADRA can improve the quality of life of millions through nine impact areas: social justice; disaster response; economic growth; children's needs; gender equity; community health; water, sanitation, and hygiene issues; hunger and nutrition; and livelihoods and agriculture.

**Thank you for supporting ADRA through your World Budget Offerings!**



To watch ADRA mission stories, visit [m360.tv/adra](http://m360.tv/adra).



a quarter of the population, public schools can be overcrowded and unwelcoming to Syrian children. The French curriculum is new and challenging, the teacher-to-student ratio is unfavorable to individualized learning, and there are few tutors outside of class. The ADRA Learning Center provides language learning support, small class sizes, and one-on-one tutoring.

But many refugee families are resistant to the idea of sending their child away from home, or they think the child should be working to provide for the family instead. This is where Fatima

shines. Her work is to visit the households and explain the value of the Learning Center to families in a language they can understand.

Though the need is great and the refugee population is large, Fatima continues to rise early, kiss her family goodbye, and take a taxi to the narrow, four-story ADRA building. She still greets the children on their way to the Learning Center, and she still makes her rounds to the refugee households in the neighborhood.

"I feel very good about my work with ADRA as a community mobilizer," she said. "When I visit

families and see children, they feel like my children. I want to do everything I can for them. I feel like I'm a messenger from the center to these families."

The more Fatima invests in her work, the more she wants to invest. She sees the difference in her community—more refugee kids in school and more families valuing education—but she sees a difference in herself, too.

"I've made good friends, and I spend my time doing useful things instead of just staying home," she said with a smile. "When I go to work, I feel happy."



# Return to PALAU

Melissa Gibson meets the man who killed her family when she was a 10-year-old missionary girl.



**L. Ann Hamel**

is a part of the International Service Employee (missionary) Support Team of the General Conference. She has a PhD in psychology and a doctor of ministry degree in formational counseling. Having served as a missionary and experienced personal traumatic loss, she has gained a greater sensitivity and understanding of how to support missionaries in crisis. She and her husband, Loren, live in Berrien Springs, Michigan.

**O**n December 23, 2003, I received a call from the General Conference informing me that a missionary family had been murdered on the island of Palau. Only a 10-year-old girl had survived. I was asked to go and provide care for her and support for the local church community.

I flew from Michigan, United States, on Christmas morning, praying throughout the long journey that Melissa would experience the healing presence of Jesus. Although I was trained to treat the impact of trauma, I had never before encountered trauma of this magnitude, particularly in one so young. My prayer was that God would protect Melissa from the impact of all that she had experienced.

When I landed in Palau, I was taken to meet Melissa at the Koror Seventh-day Adventist Church, the church that her father had pastored. She was a beautiful child—petite with dark brown hair and fine facial features. Although she was quiet, her demeanor didn't reflect what she had experienced in the previous few days.

## New home in the Pacific

Back in June 2002, Melissa's parents, Ruimar and Margareth



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DePaiva, accepted a call to serve as missionaries in the Republic of Palau, an island country located in the western Pacific Ocean. The family adjusted quickly to their new life. They made friends easily and became part of the local community.

Ruimar was responsible for coordinating the Adventist work on the island, and Margareth taught at the academy. They both played a very nurturing role in the lives of the student missionaries who worked at the school and often invited them to their home. Melissa remembers that her mother loved to cook and host large groups of people from the church.

Their home was outside the city on the road leading to the academy. The only other house close by belonged to the principal, but it was being remodeled, so no one lived in it. Each day, numerous construction workers passed by the DePaivas' home on their way to work on the structure.

Melissa loved Christmas, and on the evening of December 21, the sights, sounds, and smells

of the holiday filled the DePaiva home. The tree had been put up early, and now there were presents under it, not just for Melissa and her older brother, Larisson, but also for the student missionaries. Margareth began preparing food well ahead of time for the many guests who would join them for the holiday. Their home smelled of freshly baked bread and pastries, and their refrigerator was full of wonderful Brazilian food.

Ruimar had been away at meetings in Guam. He was an accomplished pianist and enjoyed playing, so after a meal together, his playing filled the home with beautiful Christmas music. Melissa remembers her mother playing a board game with her and Larisson before they had to go to bed. The following day would be Ruimar and Margareth's 15th wedding anniversary. Melissa smiles as she recalls telling her parents that she would sleep with them as an anniversary present. She fondly remembers her parents tucking her into *their* bed and her father singing her to sleep. He then



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returned to finish a project before coming to bed himself.

## The attack

As the family slept that night, an intruder entered their home through the kitchen window around three o'clock in the morning. He was one of the construction workers who had been working on the principal's house. Melissa awoke to find both parents out of bed and heard a terrible noise in the hallway.

During the next few minutes, the man murdered Melissa's parents and brother and then tied her up and put her in his trunk. He told her that she was now his property and drove away with her. The following day, he left her alone in the house while he went to work. But that evening, beginning to fear discovery, he took her to a remote part of the island, strangled her, and threw her into a ravine.

News of the event reverberated around the world: The murder of a missionary family. Three caskets. The people of Palau's

shame and remorse for what happened in their country. The president's public apology. The queen, a member of the Koror Seventh-day Adventist Church, attending the national funeral.

## Life back in the United States

Understanding the importance of giving Melissa a sense of home and belonging, her paternal grandparents, Itamar and Ruth DePaiva, brought her back to Michigan, United States, where she and her family had lived before going to Palau.

Her mother's parents, Pastor José and Marina Ottoni, came from Brazil and stayed for several months to be with her. Melissa understood that she couldn't continue living in Palau, but she hadn't wanted to leave her home there. She said that one day she would return.

A year and a half later, the DePaivas moved to Texas, where Melissa graduated from grade school, then academy, and then college. In July 2016, she married Michael Gibson. She graduated

with a nursing degree from Southwestern Adventist University, and Michael graduated with a theology degree. A few weeks after their wedding, they moved to Berrien Springs, Michigan, where he attended Andrews Theological Seminary and she worked as a nurse.

## Heart changes in prison

A few months before Melissa and Michael's wedding, I had the privilege of meeting Pastor Tiago Cunha and his wife, Claudia, in Thailand during a cross-cultural missionary training event. Originally from Portugal, Pastor Cunha was serving as the senior pastor of the Koror Seventh-day Adventist Church in Palau. Soon after beginning his ministry there, he had felt impressed to participate in the church's prison ministry program, which had been started by Melissa's father.

Not long after entering the prison, Pastor Cunha met Justin, the man who had murdered the DePaiva family. Justin was a hardened criminal serving three



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life sentences without parole. Nonetheless, it was clear that God was working in his heart. Fifteen years earlier, Ruth DePaiva had visited him in prison. “Because of Jesus, I want you to know that we forgive you,” she told him. “We want to see you in heaven one day with our son, daughter-in-law, and grandson.” Ruth’s words played over and over in Justin’s mind during the subsequent years, and the Holy Spirit used them to penetrate his heart. Melissa’s grandparents prayed for Justin through the years and provided him with Christian literature. He read those books, and they helped change his life.

At the meetings in Thailand, Pastor Cunha told me that he had studied the Bible with Justin and heard his confession and repentance for what he had done that fateful night. “He’ll be ready for baptism soon,” he said. Later, when the baptism took place, I was able to personally convey the news to Melissa.

Knowing that Melissa wanted to return to Palau, in 2018 I arranged for Pastor Cunha and his family to travel to Michigan to meet Melissa and her husband and to begin to plan their trip.

Pastor Cunha shared with Melissa that her return was important to the people of Palau. He said that Justin’s baptism had awakened, in the hearts of many people, memories of what had taken place on their island. Melissa would return as a missionary, not just as a visitor. She and Michael would do a week of prayer at the church where Melissa’s father had pastored.

Itamar and Ruth DePaiva also planned to make the trip. Now in their 80s, they had just returned from mission service in Taiwan. Ruth was recovering from a hip fracture and facing a second surgery to address painful complications from the initial one. This created concern about her pace of recovery and her ability to travel. My husband, Loren, had been Ruth and Itamar’s physician

for many years. It was decided that he and I would accompany them on the trip to provide the physical and emotional support they would need.

## A journey to healing

The journey back to Palau began in late November 2018. The first stop was Guam, for the Adventist community there had been strongly impacted by what had happened in Palau. While there, Melissa, Ruth, and I participated in a seminar on the power of forgiveness and God’s ability to heal. Many church members were touched by the testimonies Melissa and Ruth shared. As Ruth talked about the freedom that she and her family had experienced because they had chosen to forgive Justin, one woman stood up and said, “This kind of forgiveness seems impossible to most people. How does one learn to forgive the way you have forgiven?”

Ruth responded, “It’s impossible from a human perspective. The goal is not to ‘try’ to forgive but to open one’s heart to the indwelling presence of God’s Spirit and allow Him to forgive through you.”

## Royal welcome in Palau

On Sunday evening, we traveled from Guam to Palau, where Melissa was greeted at the airport by a group of people whom her family had grown to love during their months on the island. As they placed fresh flower leis around Melissa’s neck, tears came to her eyes.

Among those who had come to greet her was Queen Bilung Gloria Salii, who had organized the reception. Back in 2003, she had provided Melissa with loving support at the moment she needed it most.

After being tossed into the ravine and left for dead, Melissa had regained consciousness and crawled out. Weakened by all that had happened and the lack of food and water, she was too faint to stand. An elderly couple driving

by saw Melissa on the side of the road and brought her home to give her something to eat and drink. On hearing her story, they took her to the police and the hospital. Within a short time, news of Melissa’s survival reached the queen, and she came immediately to her bedside, providing a loving, protective presence until her grandmother arrived.

## Reconnecting with the past

The queen and other close friends had carefully planned meetings and events for Melissa to attend that would be meaningful to her. One of the meetings they planned was with the president, Tommy Remengesau, who had spoken at her family’s funeral. He told Melissa that her life and return to Palau were the greatest sermon ever preached in his country on the power of forgiveness and the healing power of God’s grace.

The queen showed Melissa and Michael around the island and brought them to her home. She also took them to the place where Melissa had been strangled and thrown into a ravine. Back in 2003, the queen had commemorated the miracle of Melissa’s survival by planting two coconut trees to mark the spot where she had been found. Melissa said that it was very meaningful to her to have the queen take her there; to see the beautiful, tall, coconut trees that she had planted; and to share the experience with Michael.

Melissa’s heart was moved as she reconnected with so many of the people and places that she loved. But she also encountered people and places that stirred memories of the tragic events of the past.

Melissa went back into the home where her family had lived and died. She was last there as a 10-year-old child. She entered the home now as a young woman with her husband by her side. Although there were tears, her heart was also filled with gratitude for all that God had done for her and the fact that

she would see her parents and brother again one day.

## Restoration in sharing

Before arriving in Palau, Melissa wasn't sure how much she wanted to share concerning her painful childhood experience. However, each evening as she experienced the love and support of the people, she began to share more and more of her story. One evening, after Michael had preached a sermon about trust, Melissa shared that she was not alone that day while locked up in Justin's house. Like Daniel in the lions' den or the three Hebrews in the fiery furnace, Jesus was with her. She said she felt His presence, and it brought her peace and calm.

When asked how she reconciled His presence in light of all that happened to her and her family, Melissa acknowledged that this is one of the most difficult questions there is for any Christian to answer. While we live in a world where sin and death reign, and there is an ongoing battle between the forces of good and evil, she said there are three possible answers to that question.

First, God allows it in order to bring some greater good out of it for us. Second, He allows it to bring some greater good out of it for someone else. Third, things happen for reasons beyond our understanding. In our finiteness as human beings, we can't know why things like this happen, but we can trust that God has a plan for us, nonetheless. She shared from her own personal experience that in

spite of all that happened, He has provided for her and protected her physically and emotionally from the long-term impact of these traumatic events.

On our last Sabbath afternoon in Palau, Melissa participated in a special session about how God is particularly close to those who suffer. As she shared some of her story, many in the congregation were inspired by God's grace in Melissa's life and how He has used her and her grandparents to inspire others to faith.

## Meeting the murderer

God's grace is a powerful force to heal and restore what is lost and broken. It's been two years since Justin gave his heart to Jesus in full surrender and was baptized. Since then, he has shared his testimony freely with all those in the prison who would listen. His life is a testimony to the saving power of the cross. He has been instrumental in leading two other prisoners into a saving relationship with Jesus, and he built the baptismal tank in the prison that was used for their baptisms.

Even though Justin wrote letters of apology to Melissa and her grandparents prior to his baptism, he hoped that one day he would be able to apologize in person and to thank them for their books and prayers. Prior to arriving in Palau, Melissa didn't want to visit Justin in prison. When she arrived, however, a desire began to grow in her heart to visit the man whom God had transformed. After the Sabbath afternoon session, a small group of us made our way to the prison.

Entering the room that had been set aside for our meeting with Justin was almost a surreal experience. The man who had murdered her family stood behind the table with his hands folded behind his back. He spoke first. He expressed his profound remorse for his actions. He expressed his desire to see Ruimar, Margareth, and Larisson in heaven and personally

apologize to them for what he had done. He expressed his love for our Savior and his desire to live faithfully to His calling in this life.

Ruth spoke next. She recalled their meeting 15 years earlier. She was thankful for his acceptance of Jesus and encouraged him to continue studying the Bible and growing in his relationship with the Lord. Itamar spoke next. As a true pastor, he encouraged Justin in his walk with God.

Then Melissa spoke. She had not planned to speak before we entered. With tears streaming down her face, she said, "Justin, we are all the same in God's sight. We are no better than you are. We are all in need of God's saving grace in our lives. I want to see you in heaven one day with my parents and my brother."

That day, we were witnesses to the power of the Holy Spirit to transform a life that the enemy of our souls had claimed as his own. Although Justin will spend the rest of his life in prison, he is a free man. He is a witness to the power of the gospel to all of us.

Melissa spoke a profound truth that evening, not just to Justin but to each of us. It's easy to see that Justin needs a Savior and marvel that God can transform and save someone like him. It's easy to see our sins as not so bad. Melissa recognized, however, that we are *all* sinners in God's sight. We are *all equally* in need of a savior. God's ability to save us is just as miraculous as His ability to save Justin. All heaven rejoices when any one of us comes to Jesus. We can praise Him for His marvelous gift of salvation and willingness to live and die for Justin, Melissa, and each one of us.

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Adapted with permission from Ann Hamel's original story, "Return to Palau." To read the full version, visit [adventistmission.org/return-to-palau-a-journey-of-healing-and-restoration](http://adventistmission.org/return-to-palau-a-journey-of-healing-and-restoration).

To watch Pastor Ted Wilson's interview with Melissa, visit [revivalformission.tv](http://revivalformission.tv).

Your weekly mission offerings and World Budget Offerings help support the ministry of more than 400 missionary families. Thank you!



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- 1 Ten-year-old Melissa in 2004.
- 2 The DePaiva family in 1998.
- 3 Melissa and Michael Gibson, July 3, 2016.
- 4 Melissa with the granddaughter of a friend in Palau.
- 5 Melissa with her grandfather, Itamar DePaiva.
- 6 In the queen's home. Front row, from left, Itamar and Ruth DePaiva, the queen, and Melissa and Michael Gibson. Back row, from left, Ann and Loren Hamel.
- 7 Melissa having fun with her husband.
- 8 Melissa and the president of Palau.
- 9 Visiting the Palau Aquarium.



# Ministering on the Mount of Olives



**Kayla Ewert,**  
Office of  
Adventist  
Mission

In the mountains high above Bogotá, the capital city of Colombia, a small group of believers meets each Sabbath. Up here the air is very cold, and many in this neighborhood live in poverty. The group is planting a church, wanting to offer hope in a community that experiences hardship.

Many residents make the long trip to Bogotá every day for work, and people move frequently, traveling wherever they can find employment. Others salvage what they can, usually scraps of cloth to sell. Many women work as housekeepers or nannies for wealthier families in the city.

Given this constant state of change and high level of need,

the Adventist small group follows Christ's method\* to connect with the community. They started by getting to know people and making friends. Luis Mario, the group leader, lives nearby. He understands the people and is able to minister to their needs. Often, the believers go door to door, offering food and clothing when they're able. "Working with the community is the best thing," he says. "The people are needing God and they listen. They are thirsty for the Word of God."

This project, known as *Monte de los Olivos* (Mount of Olives), was started by 5 Adventists in 2016; in 2017, the group grew with the addition of 12 new baptized

members, plus a few dozen visitors. Toward the end of 2018, almost 20 additional people, some of whom were youth, were studying the Bible regularly, with several more planning to be baptized.

## Hope for the Hopeless

God has used this committed group of believers to bring hope to this mountain community. Luis Mario tells the story of Alex,<sup>†</sup> a young man who was going through a tough time. The believers were visiting Alex and his family when Alex shared that he planned to kill himself that very night. Motivated to act, the small group prayed earnestly with



Alex and shared Bible promises with him. He decided not to go through with his plan then, and the group continued to encourage him regularly.

Alex was still dealing with the trauma he had sustained during military service, and he was angry a lot. Waves of depression sought to pull him under. But something about the hope offered spoke to him, and he eventually decided to be baptized. In the couple of years since, his outlook on life has improved. The depression has subsided, and he's able to focus on his Savior. Although he and his wife are separated, they often take their adorable toddler to church on Sabbath.

Every few months, the district pastor, Jairo Rodriguez, helps arrange health fairs and evangelistic meetings. Pastor Jairo explains, "The people aren't going to hear the spiritual message if you don't take care of their physical needs first. . . . So, we tend to people's pain and their needs, and then we're able to tend to their spiritual needs."

At the health fairs, community members can get haircuts, massages, and basic medical

and dental care. There are also seminars on natural remedies and mental health.

## Looking Toward the Future

When the small group was first started, all they had were metal chairs, which were very cold and uncomfortable. Visitors had a hard time focusing on the spiritual message. Later, the group gratefully accepted funds to purchase plastic chairs and an audiovisual system, and they noticed that visitors were more engaged and brought more visitors.

Luis Mario wants to be able to reach even more people by starting a center of influence where "we could put into practice the beliefs and sayings of Sister Ellen White." The group dreams of a space where they can offer health classes more regularly, along with hydrotherapy and clay and herbal treatments to improve the physical and mental health of the community. This facility would also serve as a distribution center for food and clothing to those in need.

Please pray for this church plant and many others throughout the beautiful country of

Colombia as they reach people for Christ. Consider supporting Global Mission pioneers who are actively engaged in this effort and are constantly finding new ways to demonstrate God's love and compassion for His children.

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\* "Christ's method alone will give true success in reaching the people. The Saviour mingled with men as one who desired their good. He showed His sympathy for them, ministered to their needs, and won their confidence. Then He bade them, 'Follow Me'" (Ellen G. White's *The Ministry of Healing*, p. 143).

† Name changed

## Support church planting in Colombia!

Give to "New Projects in Colombia (Fund #6440CO)." About \$25,000 is still needed to fully fund these 29 Global Mission pioneers.

### Ways to Give

- ▶ Mail: Global Mission, General Conference  
12501 Old Columbia Pike  
Silver Spring, MD 20904-6601
- ▶ Online: [Global-Mission.org/giving](http://Global-Mission.org/giving)
- ▶ Phone: 800-648-5824



To watch video stories about pioneers, visit [m360.tv/pioneer](http://m360.tv/pioneer).



## ZAMBIA



# GAME CHANGERS

1



From Brazil, **Daniel Braun** serves as an assistant boys' dean at Longburn Adventist College in New Zealand. Previously, he served as a Bible worker in Zambia.

**A** 21-year-old Brazilian theology student going through his darkest time, living a life that up until that point had been pretty mediocre, I was almost convinced that atheism or some form of nihilism would be the only reasonable way to make the most of the air I had left in my lungs. This was me before leaving school for one semester to serve as a missionary in Zambia—a country located on the African continent, a country I knew nothing about except for the great safaris and, of course, the famous Victoria Falls. Shame on me.

Three other student missionaries from Brazil went with me: Lucas, Guilherme, and Victor. Although we came from different backgrounds, all of us were going through a period of hurting in our lives.

After our flight landed, we took a bus to travel the last thousand kilometers to our final destination, a village outside the city of Chipata, the home of Mwami Adventist Hospital.



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- 1 With Zambian youth during an outreach.
- 2 Praying for Mr. Piri, one of the two men with leprosy.
- 3 A guitar was a surprisingly uncommon instrument in Zambia. Every youngster was keen to learn!

Awaiting us was no electricity, no running water, no shower, no nothing. Two surreal moments are forever engraved in my memory.

We were assistants of the local pastor, preaching on Sabbaths, visiting people in the villages, and with the help of a translator, sharing and singing the gospel; a gospel that up until that point had never been a reality in my life. One Sabbath, my friends and I were invited to visit a woman who was demon possessed.

All the complex theological concepts I had learned in my college classes seemed inadequate for an occasion that asked for one thing only: the exaltation of Jesus' name. We sang praises and read portions of scripture while listening to screams from the devastating darkness that had turned her existence into endless night. In awe, we watched the power of Jesus silence the chaos within her and leave her in peace.

The second experience happened in one of the hospital rooms on a Sabbath afternoon.

Anyone who's read the Bible is familiar with its stories about people with leprosy, but seeing this disease face-to-face is completely different.

As my friends and I walked into the room, the atmosphere felt heavy. In front of us were two older men, both of whom had been abandoned by their families for eight years. They never had visitors. Both of their hands were gone as well as their vision. They had no toes and no company except for an old radio. Day by day, waiting for death, these men were experiencing hell.



When they learned that some missionaries had come to visit them and sing a few songs, they smiled, and I had to hold back my tears.

After singing and praying with the men, I realized that although they were physically diseased, I needed healing. My experience in Africa taught me that although God doesn't need my help, He still wants me and that Christ works in me, through me, and despite me. Finally, I learned that if I'm not living to make someone else's existence less painful and their burdens lighter, then I'm not living at all.



If you're interested in being a volunteer, please visit [AdventistVolunteers.org](http://AdventistVolunteers.org).



Hear from other volunteers at [m360.tv/avs](http://m360.tv/avs).

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CARE CENTER for children with special needs



LOOKING FOR A WAY

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# LIFE CENTER

HERE ARE SOME IDEAS ALREADY AT

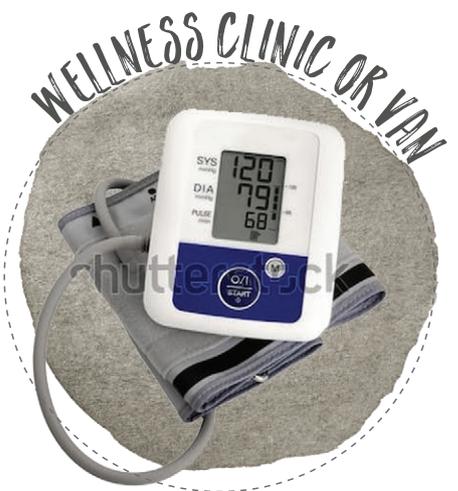




ACTIVITY CENTER for the elderly



REFUGEE/MIGRANT CENTER



WELLNESS CLINIC OR VAN



CLOTHING LIBRARY AND COUNSELING for new moms



FITNESS CENTER



FOOD PANTRY

TO SERVE YOUR CITY?  
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To read or watch stories of these and other successful Life Hope Centers, visit [MissionToTheCities.org/life-hope-centers](http://MissionToTheCities.org/life-hope-centers).

To learn how your church can start a center, register at [UrbanCenters.org](http://UrbanCenters.org).



# Breaking My Title



From Colorado, United States, **Madison Kamarad** is earning a degree in international rescue and relief at Union College, Nebraska. She serves as a volunteer medical assistant at the Pagudpud Adventist Wellness Center in the Philippines.

Growing up, I listened to Eric B. Hare's cassette tapes with my little sister before we went to bed. I heard wild stories of how God interacted in people's lives and stories of what it would be like to be a missionary. I would lie in bed and wish that my family had the opportunity to be missionaries somewhere across the globe.

That dream never died. In college, I began earning a degree in international rescue and relief with an emphasis on community development and a minor in social work. My dream was to work for mission-minded organizations. But how could I feel so strongly about this passion when I had never tagged along on a single mission trip?

Several of my friends had decided to take a year off from their studies to serve God in a foreign land. Was He calling me too? Over time, I found myself signing up to be a medical assistant in Pagudpud, Philippines.



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Upon arrival, my serving heart believed that I was going to convert every person I met and heal every sickness I encountered. It didn't take me long to realize that I wasn't really needed at the clinic. You see, the clinic is fully staffed and could function easily without me. The first month, I really struggled with what my purpose was.

I reached out to Andrew Saunders, a great mentor of mine, and asked him why I was in the Philippines if they didn't necessarily need my help. "Sometimes we need to be humbled and realize the world can go on without us and that we need to step back and learn," he replied. I had imagined that my mission year was my year to be a superhero. I later understood that my service is what I made it. "What do you think Jesus would do in your position?" Saunders asked. "I personally believe He would have you be humble, learn as much as you can from the local

population, build relationships, and show people you care."

That's when I realized that I had put myself in a box and limited myself to my title.

My student missionary family and I started getting more involved in the community. During the winter, we began teaching fourth-grade English at a nearby school. We set up a booth on market days to offer people free blood pressure and blood sugar tests. On Thursday and Sabbath evenings, we hosted Vacation Bible School (VBS) programs in three locations. A few of us gave ukulele, piano, and violin lessons to the kids that are not offered music programs in school. We visited the villagers in the village of Nagsango to give them free blood pressure tests and fresh fruit and to pray with them. We held a fundraiser to purchase a much-needed van for the clinic, and, with God's help, raised more than \$10,000 for the down payment.



If you're interested in being a volunteer, visit [AdventistVolunteers.org](http://AdventistVolunteers.org).

Watch video stories about AVS volunteers at [m360.tv/avs!](http://m360.tv/avs!)

I had registered to be a medical assistant, but God knew I was capable of doing and being much more. He taught me not to limit my service to the definition of my title and freed me to help others in a variety of ways.

Whatever title you have, please don't limit yourself to your label. Let God use you in the most surprising ways.

- 1 Two of my friends at church, both of whom are named Aya.
- 2 I taught the fourth-graders English while they taught me the true meaning of love and joy.
- 3 Our student missionary family.  
*Top to bottom, left to right:* Micah Chairprakorb, Ryan Haakenson, Marcus Tann, Brandon Korompis, Sheldon Ramos, Chantelle Bravatti, me, Megan Correces, Jacob Enjati, Michelle Sabangan, Madison Oliver, Jade Bautista, and April Faylogna, our host.



# #FollowHim



**Kayla Ewert**, Office of Adventist Mission

What does it mean to you to follow Jesus? How would you tell someone about it?

For the first time, Adventist Mission held a contest for youth 18 years old and under, and we asked them these questions. To enter the #FollowHim contest, each young person made a short film about what they believe it means to follow Jesus every day. Watch all five winning films at [AdventistMission.org/followhim!](https://AdventistMission.org/followhim)

## MEET THE WINNERS



### 1ST PLACE | ENGLAND

## NIDHI, 18

**Prize:** Canon M100 Mirrorless Camera with Lens.

**Bonus Prize:** Nidhi's mentor of choice, Chisola Chitambala, will receive a one-year online learning subscription to Masterclass.

**Mission 360° (M360°):** What attracted you to filmmaking?

**Nidhi:** I was introduced to filmmaking a year ago, during my media lesson at school. It was fascinating to see how directors captured a story and displayed that in the form of a moving image. Being able to study an aspect of filmmaking enabled me to realise that producing meaningful content could inspire others to fulfill their God-given purpose in life.

**M360°:** What does your film mean to you?

**Nidhi:** My film is a reflection of Christ in my life. It's a reminder to me that my life should be a Christ-led life and I should use every single moment of it to influence and inspire those around me.

**M360°:** What message do you hope people will take from your film?

**Nidhi:** I hope people are inspired to live the life they want in the way God intends them to do.

**M360°:** How do you plan to use your media skills for God in the future?

**Nidhi:** I want to create and capture genuine content that will benefit others who watch it. I want people to observe God's goodness in the lives of other people through the content I create.

**M360°:** The contest theme was #FollowHim. What would you say to other young people who want to follow Jesus?

**Nidhi:** I strongly believe that if you want to do anything, you must do it properly. It's the same when it comes to following Christ. When we as young people decide to follow Christ, it should be a genuine choice that we make. Following Christ means accepting him as your personal Saviour and yearning for that lifestyle change. It's not an easy choice to make, but with constant prayer and devotion, with God all things are possible. It means taking a bold decision, which will last you a lifetime of His great blessings.



### 2ND PLACE | CALIFORNIA, USA

## YAKOV, 14

**Prize:** LitraPro Bi-Color Light

**M360°:** What attracted you to filmmaking?

**Yakov:** There is no better feeling to me than

experiencing the final product of something you've been working hard on. Filmmaking is the only thing where the joy of experiencing a finished product is equal to the joy of creating it.

**M360°:** What does your film mean to you?

**Yakov:** It gives recognition to the students of Calexico Mission School and specifically the challenges they have to go through to get to school every day.

**M360°:** What message do you hope people will take from your film?

**Yakov:** Whenever you feel like you can't deal with the challenges you're facing, remember God has a plan for you and all you need to do is put your trust in Him and keep pushing forward.

**M360°:** How do you plan to use your media skills for God in the future?

**Yakov:** In a few months, I will travel to Indonesia for a mission trip and will record the whole trip in a

documentary-esque video. I look forward to seeing what else God has planned for me in the future.

**M360°:** The contest theme was #FollowHim. What would you say to other young people who want to follow Jesus?

**Yakov:** Life can get tough sometimes. It can seem bleak, and you may not know what you're gonna do to get out of whatever horrible circumstances you may be in. But *you* don't need to do anything but trust in the Lord and follow Him. He knows what's best for you, and only He knows where the path He has for you ends up.



### 3RD PRIZE | WASHINGTON, USA

## TAVIMBANASHE, 17

**Prize:** Langly Simple Camera Bag

**M360°:** What attracted you to filmmaking?

**Tavimbanashe:** My siblings and I inherited the love of videography and photography from my dad, who has been an amateur in the field ever since we were born. I especially love filmmaking because it opens the opportunity to share a moment in time or a story with others and make it long lasting.

**M360°:** What does your film mean to you?

**Tavimbanashe:** My younger siblings and I didn't have fancy equipment with which to make this film. This turned out to be a good thing because it challenged us to be creative and to improvise and work closely together as a team. This film will forever mean a lot to me because, through it, I learned that God can use anything for His glory.

**M360°:** What message do you hope people will take from your film?

**Tavimbanashe:** I want everyone to realize that mission is a vital part of the Christian life. So many times, we as Christians get carried away living for ourselves, and we forget that there is a world out there for us to reach. When we reach out to others, we will grow closer to Jesus. Mission benefits both the missionary and the people who are being served.

**M360°:** How do you plan to use your media skills for God in the future?

**Tavimbanashe:** I have a dream of using social media as a platform to share God's love with the world.

**M360°:** The contest theme was #FollowHim. What would you say to other young people who want to follow Jesus?

**Tavimbanashe:** God gave us a wonderful gift in His Word, and the Bible reveals to us what He is really like. While Jesus was on earth, He lived a life of service to others; He was a missionary. As a young person who wants to follow Jesus, ask Him to take your life and use it for His glory. Jesus will give you the strength to follow in His footsteps and live a life of service just like He did.

### HONORABLE MENTIONS

**Prize:** Joby GorillaPod 3K Flexible Mini-Tripod with Ball Head Kit



**Bashir, 11**  
from Senegal



**Andrew, 17**  
from Missouri,  
USA

Caleb Haakenson, winner of the 2018 "My Story, My Mission" student film contest, will share a story about his prize trip with Adventist Mission producers later this year. Look for it in an upcoming issue of *Mission 360°*!

# Help Send Global Mission Pioneers!

Millions of people around the world still don't know Jesus. Global Mission sends pioneers to unentered areas to start new groups of believers. Pioneers are local people who already speak the language and understand the culture. Using Christ's method of ministry, they strive to meet people's needs and bid them to follow Jesus.



ETHIOPIA

## The Family I Found

When Solomon (*back row, far left*) left his village to go to another town to work on a government farm, he felt very homesick and lonely. One day, he saw a man on the street who wore a big smile. The man was a Global Mission pioneer and introduced himself as Berhanu (*back row, far right*). Solomon was happy to discover that they were from the same village!

When Berhanu invited him to join a small group meeting, Solomon eagerly accepted. At the meeting, Berhanu shared about his experience with God's love. The family atmosphere and Berhanu's messages filled a hole in Solomon's heart, and he's since become a member of the congregation.

Through Berhanu's efforts, the work of hundreds of Global Mission pioneers around the world, and your faithful support, many people in the 10/40 Window are joining God's family.



MONGOLIA

## And A Child Will Lead Them

"This is our church's last meeting," a member of a Christian church sadly told the other 20 or so adults gathered in the room after the service one Sunday. Discouraged that attendance had drastically decreased, they were about to close their church permanently.

But Bumchin, an Adventist eighth-grader visiting the church, led a Bible study to encourage them. With renewed vigor, the small congregation continued meeting together as Bumchin and an Adventist pastor he invited gave them regular Bible presentations.

Soon the church's membership grew to 27, and by the end of the year, they unanimously voted to become an Adventist church!

Years later, Bumchin (*pictured*) is now a Global Mission pioneer planting churches around Mongolia. Please pray for him and the people in Mongolia who come to know Jesus through pioneers like him.

Global Mission pioneers need your help in order to share the Advent message with people who haven't heard it.

### THREE WAYS TO GIVE

**Mail:** Global Mission, General Conference  
12501 Old Columbia Pike, Silver Spring, MD 20904-6601

**Online:** [Global-Mission.org/giving](http://Global-Mission.org/giving)

**Phone:** 800-648-5824

