

mission

STORIES FROM AROUND THE WORLD

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THE OFFICE OF
ADVENTIST MISSION
VOLUME 9
NUMBER 4

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EDITORIAL

The other day, a man asked me whether a story had to include a miracle to be published in *Mission 360°*. I said no because the type of miracle he had in mind was along the lines of someone being saved in a crisis by what could only be angels. I explained that while some of our missionaries have shared stunning interventions from God, such miracles are rare, and we can feature other kinds of stories.

After this conversation, the thought occurred to me that *Mission 360°* has been full of miracle stories all along. The stirring of the heart. The shifting of priorities. The melting of fear and doubt. The awakening of love and hope and trust. These changes, slow and often imperceptible, like the growth of buds during the chilly weeks of spring, are no less a demonstration of God's amazing power to save.

This issue of *Mission 360°* features several stories that involve "gradual miracles," the kind that God gives us the joy of participating in. They reveal how He uses your support of mission to work His wonders. Your prayers and donations make an eternal difference. Thank you for being part of the miracle of rebirth in the lives of others!

Laurie Falvo,
Editor



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ABOUT OUR COVER PHOTO . . .

PHOTO BY RICKY OLIVERAS

I met Dinesh in South Asia while gathering Global Mission stories. He had been baptized through the ministry of a pioneer who used his home as an urban center of influence. Dinesh now shares the three angels' messages with his community. You can read his story, "Dinesh's Heart," on page 4 of this magazine.

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1

Dinesh's Heart



Laurie Falvo,
Office of
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Dinesh could barely bring himself to tell his parents about his symptoms, but he didn't dare ignore them any longer.

His parents were poor. There was hardly enough money to feed their large family, never mind pay for hospital bills. But when they learned that Dinesh was suffering, they were determined to get him care.

Tests revealed that Dinesh had been born with a hole between the chambers of his heart. The

defect was forcing his heart to work harder and harder to distribute oxygen throughout his body. And it was slowly losing the battle.

"Is the condition fatal?" his parents asked the doctor.

"It can be if not corrected," he replied. "Fortunately, we can perform surgery to repair the hole."

"How much will it cost?"

The doctor's response was a cruel reminder of the reality that tyrannized their lives: hope was a luxury of the rich.

During the next five years, Dinesh received occasional treatments to alleviate his symptoms. But they didn't help much. As his condition worsened, he agonized over why the gods allowed him to suffer when he had been so devoted to them.

Desperate to help, Dinesh's elder brother took him to specialists in the large city where he lived. Perhaps they could intervene. But their assessment was grim: even if the surgery were free, there was no guarantee Dinesh would survive it.

Dinesh returned home broken spirited. He quit his studies and retreated from life. "My heart held no interest in anything anymore," he explained. "I felt disgraced by my life, and I didn't want to burden my family. I had known that it was only a matter of time before I died. Now I wanted to die."

One day, Dinesh's mother learned about a local church from a neighbor. "You should go," she encouraged. "People have been healed there."

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Dinesh felt a flicker of hope and decided to go. During the sermon, he learned that Jesus had died and risen again so that he, too, might rise again someday after his death. He surrendered his heart to Jesus that day and decided to trust Him with his life. "I sensed a voice telling me that I would be all right," he recalled. "And now, eight or nine years later, I am all right!"

About a year ago, Dinesh learned about a seminar being presented by a Seventh-day Adventist speaker named Pradeep. Curious about what Adventists believe, he attended the program and talked with Pradeep afterward. Pradeep was a Global Mission pioneer, a church member who had moved into a city with no Adventist presence to start a new group of believers. He and his wife had turned their home into an urban center of influence to minister to their community's physical and spiritual needs. They invited Dinesh to visit. He accepted their invitation, and his life has never been the same.

"I joined Pradeep's Bible study class and learned about the three angels' messages," Dinesh said. "I accepted them as God's truth, and now I'm sharing them with people in my village."

Dinesh requested baptism and became a member of Pradeep's church plant. Now he volunteers his time sharing the gospel with those who don't know Jesus. "My whole family has come to believe in God and His promises!" Dinesh shared, his soft, brown eyes smiling.

"I want to thank everyone who makes the ministry of Global Mission pioneers possible," Dinesh added. "You send pioneers to help us, and they're sending us to help others. Your sacrifice and support have inspired us to carry the gospel on our shoulders to those who haven't heard it."

Dinesh asked that you pray that he will faithfully continue to help others prepare for Jesus' soon return. "There are many people who are suffering and dying here. They hear many confusing teachings. They're asking questions about God and how they can be saved. It's our duty to tell them that God loves them and that He wants them to live."

Dinesh had more than one kind of hole in his heart that God healed. In addition to experiencing improved health, the aching void he felt has been filled with inexpressible peace and joy. He radiates wholeness, purpose, and earnest love for Jesus and his community. Dinesh has a new heart, and he's helping others to have one too!



GLOBAL MISSION

Global Mission pioneers are sharing God's end-time message in many countries around the world. Please help Global Mission pioneers reach the 66 percent of the world's population who haven't had the opportunity to experience Jesus. To learn more, visit global-mission.org.

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- 1 Dinesh
- 2 Dinesh, *right*, with Global Mission pioneer Pradeep
- 3 Dinesh, *far right*, with some of the members of the church plant



Watch a video about Global Mission pioneer Pradeep at m360.tv/s2049.

We Know the End of the Story

How much longer will this go on? Pastor, can't you tell God we've suffered enough and that He can return now?"

The woman's mask hid her facial expressions but not the pain in her voice as she implored the two visiting pastors and my husband, a pastor in training, to give her some insight into the economic and political crisis in her country. Like many Lebanese, she had family members who had fled the country years earlier for a better life. Yet, she had chosen to remain in her beloved homeland. Perhaps she, like me, had recognized the deep value of living among the mountains, the homemade preserved cherries, the rose bushes and wild thyme, and the rough-hewn stone walls that built not only dwellings but lives.

She was a teacher by trade, although recently, she had cut back to two months a year of substitute teaching because that's all she could manage with the economic crisis. "It would cost me one million Lebanese pounds a month for gas to commute if I was teaching regularly," she told us. One million pounds represents anywhere from a third to two-thirds of a salary in the current economy.

The woman's home was filled with lovely art décor. Glass hutchers held years of memories and mementos, including a photo she lovingly pointed out of her father, who had passed away a few years earlier. Everything was meticulously arranged to please the eye, yet it was a beauty that very few people saw.

"I'm lonely," she shared. "I believe that God is the One who controls our lives and we don't choose many things. Otherwise, why am I living by myself?" Then, looking directly at me, she added, "You know what it's like. We women need companionship."

She was right. Perhaps that's why she had invited me to come along on the pastoral visit that evening. She instinctively knew that there would be a connection between us.

We shared a delicious feast around her dining room table as we laughed together, inquired about her tasty homemade olives, ate bowls of pumpkin soup, and then tried to find space for the dessert that followed.

After reading a few verses from Matthew 24 that refer to the signs of Jesus' second coming, the pastors prayed, and it was time for us to head home. We invited her to visit us in return and left with bags full of greenery from her garden and two small plastic tubs of organic lemonade mix.

As we drove away, she stood in the dimly lit driveway and waved. The city lights flickered off, and then the generator took over. The municipality had sent out a letter just that week informing its residents that the power would be shut off several hours each night due to diesel rationing. Even in this situation, she had managed to find something to be thankful for, remarking that at least it was in the middle of the night.

We waved one last time and then drove off into the darkness, a car full of people, leaving her standing in the driveway, silent and alone. When we reached home, I told my husband that I wanted to visit her again.

I came to Lebanon in 2016 excited to embark on my own missionary adventure with Adventist Volunteer Service. I was returning to my roots because I'd lived here as a teenager and had missed my friends and the country. One year turned into two, and soon I had passed my five-year mark. However, the honeymoon adventure had shifted drastically, and my life was now severely restricted by the pandemic and the country's economic crises. I had lost my passion for mission service. The tedious difficulty of life had worn me down until I felt so overwhelmed that even going to the grocery store was a big undertaking.

Then I met this dear woman. During our short visit, I was reminded yet again that I have a purpose in life—to love and care for others in any way I can. We are to encourage each other with hope because, as my husband so aptly puts it, "We know the end of the story."

Jesus is coming back soon, and all our pain and suffering will be over. This is such good news. Let's tell the others!



Maria Lombart lives with her husband, Sirwan, in Beirut, Lebanon, where she is the executive secretary for the president at Middle East University. She grew up in the mission field and has been in Lebanon with Adventist Volunteer Service since 2016.



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Would you like to help make a positive impact in the lives of others? If so, please consider volunteering through Adventist Volunteer Service, which facilitates church members' volunteer 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.



To see what's happening in mission in the Middle East and North Africa Union Mission, visit m360.tv/middleeast.



The King Tut Roadshow



Beth Thomas is a freelance writer and editor living in the United States with her husband and two children.

Visitors file into the dark interior of the semitruck, looking around pensively. The show is about to start, but they aren't quite sure what to expect at the King Tut Roadshow. The space buzzes with excitement.

Suddenly, a video presentation flashes onto three large screens. Guests are surrounded by narration and pictures of ancient Egypt as glass panels open around them, revealing artifacts mentioned in the script. They see a life-sized replica of the Rosetta stone, the key to unlocking the ancient hieroglyphic code; King Tut (Tutankhamun) introduces them to his father, Akhenaten, and mother, Nefertiti. Before they move on to the second of three rooms, visitors see about 20 of the deities the ancient Egyptians worshiped.

The next room is a reproduction of King Tut's tomb, discovered in 1922 by Howard Carter, the world-famous English archaeologist and Egyptologist. Through advanced multimedia, guests feel like they're walking down into the tomb, led by Carter himself. They hear conversations around them as the archaeological team uncovers relics buried with King Tut before learning about his mummified body and intricate death mask. As guests finish the second room, they are confronted with several questions: What about death and the afterlife? Were the Egyptians right? If there is such a thing as the afterlife, should we be preparing for it?

The last room features the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls. Visitors see replicas of the scrolls, including the full text of the book of Isaiah. The room is full of real artifacts, too, including two-thousand-year-old pieces of pottery collected by the King Tut Roadshow founder, Wayne French.

French says, "In the late 1970s I was given my first artifacts from the Middle East . . . These were three bricks dating back to 605bc from Babylon, Iraq, with King Nebuchadnezzar's name stamped on them—they were genuine pieces, not mere copies. These three bricks are still in



my collection, and you can see them in the ‘Scroll Room’ on The King Tut Roadshow. That began my lifelong journey of buying and collecting artifacts and pottery that gave evidence for stories from the ancient Hebrew Writings.”

Beginnings

When French, who holds a doctoral degree in youth ministry with a postgraduate certificate in archaeology, retired, he turned his lifelong love for teaching and archaeology into a ministry.

The King Tut Roadshow began in 2018 with French and a few volunteers. With funding through Global Mission grants from the General Conference Office of Adventist Mission, the South Pacific Division, and the Australian Union, they purchased and renovated a semitrailer and produced videos and other content to create a mobile museum.

The team would take French’s artifacts to communities throughout the east coast of Australia, especially to remote areas where schools don’t have access to larger museums, and provide interactive history lessons.

French and his crew arranged for the trailer to visit a few Adventist schools in the region to gauge the response. The project officially launched at the Mission to the Cities and Church Planting Conference at Avondale College in February 2019.

Throughout the 2019 school year, more than 28 schools, including many public schools in Melbourne, coordinated with French to have the mobile museum conduct a history unit for their students. In 2020, the number of participating schools grew to 60. Teachers and administrators at every school they visited were so impressed with the presentations that The King Tut Roadshow has a standing invitation to return every year.

French and his team have been busy creating new resources for teachers that fulfill requirements for the Australian school curriculum, including games and apps for tablets and mobile phones.

Cultural Response

One weekend, The King Tut Roadshow visited the Auburn Adventist school and church in Sydney. They conducted a program for the school on Friday and French preached at the church on Sabbath. On Sunday, the church held a festival for the community, highlighting the trailer and history program.

The team was excited when several Egyptian Coptic Christians came through the exhibit. The visitors were skeptical before they went through the theatrettes but “came out glowing,” French remarked. This is a great example of how the program can be leveraged by a congregation to build connections in the community.

Recently, The King Tut Roadshow visited the Arab Republic of Egypt’s ambassador in Canberra.



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In a personal letter written to French, the ambassador remarked how delighted he was with the “world-class educational and audio-visual content” he experienced as he toured The King Tut Roadshow semitrailer.

He recommended “that any student or Egyptian history enthusiast see this amazing state-of-the-art display. Its educational value is undeniable, and indeed, will undoubtedly imbue any student with a deep curiosity and passion for learning about history and archaeology.”

Since then, the ambassador has called on The King Tut Roadshow twice to attend events he has hosted for special guests in Canberra. He plans for the traveling museum to be on hand for a festival organized by the embassy, perhaps later next year, depending on COVID-19 factors.

A Deeper Purpose

While it is entertaining and educational, there is a deeper purpose to the ministry. French and his team seek, in an unassuming way, to introduce students and the public to the validity of the scriptures, using historical and archaeological artifacts to spark interest and meaningful spiritual questions.

The King Tut Roadshow is especially sensitive to its audience, which ranges from secular people, with no biblical background, to deeply committed Christians.

Wayne Krause, director of Adventist Mission and the strategy leader for Mission to the Cities for the South Pacific region of the Adventist Church, is excited about this project. “This innovative outreach initiative reaches thousands of public

school children and their families. Booked out nearly a year in advance, it’s being used to help plant churches and be part of evangelistic events in our major cities,” he says.

Today, in a world where chaos and uncertainty often rule, this unique, mobile urban center of influence is providing tangible proof that there is something more to cling to—something that can be trusted. We invite you to pray for this ministry as they plan for the future and plant more seeds for the harvest.

- 1 Dr. French (left), founder of The King Tut Roadshow mobile museum, stands with the Egyptian ambassador to Australia (center) and a volunteer after a personal tour through the exhibit
- 2 The King Tut Roadshow mobile museum travels to schools and churches, presenting a hands-on archaeological experience for the community at large
- 3 The Egyptian ambassador to Australia presented Dr. Wayne French with a personal commendation, recognizing the stellar work The King Tut Roadshow is doing for schools in Australia
- 4 Dr. Wayne French and a colleague (center) pose with the Egyptian ambassador and his staff inside the Arab Republic of Egypt embassy in Yarralumla, Australia, after a personal tour through the King Tut Roadshow exhibit



Urban Centers of Influence

Global Mission supports wholistic mission to the cities through the ministry of hundreds of urban centers of influence. These centers follow Christ’s method of ministry to meet people’s needs and start new groups of believers. To learn more, visit MissionToTheCities.org.

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Changing My World

Overwhelmed. Stressed. Worried. That's how I felt as a teacher of 400 public school students in one of El Salvador's most beautiful and dangerous cities.

I arrived in the country with plans to change the world and confidence that God could help me overcome any obstacle that got in my way. For the first six months, everything went to plan. Then things began to unravel.

The long teaching hours and the stress of dealing with my students' problems drained my energy. At the start of each school day, I felt more and more exhausted.

I was also running out of money. My habit was to prepare breakfast and lunch at home and take them with me to work because I couldn't afford to buy meals in the city.

One day, I forgot my meals at home and realized it only when I was about to enter the school. "God, you know I'm hungry," I prayed. "Please provide me with something to eat." A moment later, I heard a voice from behind me. "Miss, take this," one of my ninth-grade students said, handing me a milkshake in a plastic bag. I was so grateful for the cool drink. I was still savoring it when another student offered me an empanada, a type of turnover with a hot, tasty filling. God didn't provide me with just one breakfast that day. I enjoyed three. In fact, I didn't even need to worry about buying lunch!

Later that month, my financial situation reached a crisis. I had only two dollars left. It was a Thursday, and school vacation would start the next Monday. I was relieved that I wouldn't have to pay for bus tickets to and from school for a week, but I still felt anxious about how I would survive until my next paycheck. It didn't help that I had 400 tests to grade for my students to close out the quarter. I was so stressed that I couldn't concentrate.

I was lying on the couch in the teacher's room when another teacher entered. She asked me how I was doing, and I just started crying. I knew (or I



Originally from Argentina, **Sabri Castro** served as a teacher in El Salvador through an Adventist volunteer organization called Smiles Foundation. She is currently teaching English to Syrian refugees and Lebanese children in Lebanon through Adventist Volunteer Service.



If you're interested in being a volunteer, visit AdventistVolunteers.org.



Watch video stories about Adventist Volunteer Service missionaries at m360.tv/avs.

To learn more about Smiles Foundation, visit en.fundacionsmiles.org.

thought I knew) that the God I served was capable of anything and that He would take care of me.

I had plenty of reasons to trust Him. He had provided a beautiful, affordable place for me to live, helped me stretch my monthly income to purchase necessities, and protected me in a place surrounded by gangsters (once I almost fell over a dead body on the street). He had given me wisdom to help one student whose mother had just abandoned her and another student who told me that he had become a gangster and was selling drugs at school. Yet, in my current emergency, I wasn't thinking about how God had provided for me in the past. I'm thankful that my forgetfulness didn't stop God from coming to my rescue.

That teacher, with whom I had barely spoken before, hugged me, listened to me, offered me money (I didn't accept it), and told me, "Think of me as your mom here. Next week, I'm going on vacation. I want you to come with me."

"I can't afford to go with you," I replied.

"You're coming with me, and that's final," she announced.

So it was that I enjoyed a much-needed two-day vacation in the beautiful mountains of El Salvador!

Part of God's plan for helping me trust Him was to allow me to experience problems that only He could help me with. Unfortunately, I'm a slow learner. Sometimes I get scared and forget how He's always been there for me. But He's always faithful to me. He comforts me when I'm stressed, provides for me when I'm in need, and hugs me when I'm overwhelmed. And slowly, I'm growing to trust Him more and more.

I thought I'd gone to El Salvador to teach, but God sent me there to learn. I thought I went to change the world. Instead, God changed me!



1

The Bridge Builder

Honoring Richard Elofer's passion for sharing Jesus with Jews

You are no longer my son!" Those were the words Richard heard as his father threw him out of their house. After that day, Richard didn't see his father for 10 years.

Richard was born into an Orthodox Jewish family in Casablanca, Morocco. At that time, living there was difficult for Jews, so his family moved to Paris, France, when Richard was a young boy. In the suburb of Paris where they lived, there was no Jewish synagogue, so Richard's father started one. What began as a home synagogue eventually became the official synagogue in the town of Villejuif. Richard celebrated his bar mitzvah in this synagogue.

When Richard attended primary school, he made a friend whose father was one of the few Adventists in Villejuif at that time. Through this

family, Richard was introduced to the Messiah. Over the next few years, he used every opportunity to go to his friend's house so that he could study the Bible. Over time, Richard began to feel a change in his outlook on life.

After studying the Bible for several years, Richard felt ready to accept Jesus as the Messiah, but his family didn't approve of his decision. His father had several rabbis meet with Richard to try to change his mind. But no argument could compete with Richard's newfound understanding of the Bible. Seeing that Richard couldn't be swayed, his father disowned him and made him leave the house.

The next time that Richard saw his father was 10 years later, at Richard's older brother's wedding. His father invited him to the celebration at the insistence of Richard's relatives. According to Richard, the encounter wasn't warm, but it was a start to the mending of their relationship. Richard says that their meetings progressively improved to the point that eventually, they were able to relate to one another as father and son again.

From the time he gave his life to Jesus, Dr. Elofer has been passionate about sharing the gospel with Jewish people. He spent 43 years working as a colporteur and a pastor and served as the president of the Israel Field for 15 years. While serving in Israel, he was also appointed as director of the World Jewish-Adventist Friendship Center (WJAFC), one of six centers set up by Global Mission to build bridges of understanding to other world religions and communities.

In 2012, Dr. Elofer moved back to Paris to continue his work in reaching the Jewish people and serve full-time as the director of the WJAFC. While there, he also led an Adventist Jewish congregation that met regularly and focused on making connections between the Jewish and Adventist faiths.

For 18 years, Dr. Elofer sent out a weekly newsletter in several languages. In March 2021, he informed his subscribers that the issue they were receiving would be the last under his leadership. Dr. Elofer retired from his position of director of the WJAFC in August 2021. His tireless work comprises hundreds of seminars and sermons delivered all around the world; thousands of pages of writing, some of which are presented in the three volumes he authored of an ongoing Bible commentary series based on Jewish sources and thought; and his passionate advocacy for mission to the Jews.

Dr. Mike Ryan, former director of Global Mission, says, "Richard joins the list of Seventh-day Adventists who passionately worked for and believed that Jewish people are not only chosen of God, but they are loved by God, and through the grace of Jesus will live eternally in the New Jerusalem."



2

- 1 Dr. Richard Elofer
- 2 Twelve-year-old Richard (right) with his brother and parents on the day of his bar mitzvah
- 3 Dr. Elofer with the Adventist Jewish congregation in Paris, France
- 4 The first three volumes of Dr. Richard Elofer's Bible commentary series based on Jewish-Adventist sources and thought are available on Amazon



3



Watch a video about Richard Elofer at m360.tv/s1642.

Discover effective ways to introduce Jews to Jesus by visiting the Global Mission World Jewish-Adventist Friendship Center at wjafc.globalmissioncenters.org.



4



Pray Your Way Around the World

Calling all prayer missionaries!



Karilyn Suvankham,
communication specialist for the Global Mission Centers and Mission to the Cities

Fun fact: Some cities have a larger population than some countries! The world's largest city, Tokyo, is so large that there are 88 countries whose total population combined would still be smaller than that of the Tokyo metro area!

Over time, the city has grown, spread, and merged with smaller surrounding cities, resulting in a massive urban area called an agglomeration.

While Tokyo has grown to such an amazing size, the number of Christian believers in the city has remained small. Only about 1 percent of the people in Japan are Christians.

While Tokyo is the world's largest city, it's still just one of many large cities! Worldwide there are hundreds of large agglomerations. Thirty-seven of them have more than 10 million residents each.

More than 100 years ago, Ellen White urged the Seventh-day Adventist Church to reach the large cities of the world:

"Oh, that we might see the needs of these cities as God sees them!"¹ she wrote, adding that "the work in the cities is the essential work for this time."² She prompted, "Work the cities without delay, for time is short."³

But in 1900, around that very time, only 15 cities on earth had more than one million residents. Today, that number has increased to more than 600!

Many of these cities have only one or two Adventist churches, and some still have no Adventist presence at all. How can we make a difference? Through mission offerings and donations to Global Mission, Adventists around the world contribute to critical outreach in the cities.

Prayer for Cities

Perhaps at some point in your life, you dreamed of becoming a missionary, but somehow, it never quite worked out. If that's you, or if you have a heart for those who don't know Jesus, consider how faithful, daily prayers for unreached cities could be a very real mission that could open doors and hearts, even half a world away!

One person with that heart for mission is Sharon. She has answered the call to pray wholeheartedly. The Mission to the Cities prayer map arranges these cities on lines to look like a subway map, and Sharon uses it as a guide to pray for one city each day.

She's been praying for months now. She has already checked off more than 200 of these 600 plus cities. She prays for the residents of the cities—for their health, their marriages, their leaders, and their faith. God hears her daily prayers, and Sharon believes that He is answering in quiet but amazing ways. She looks forward to hearing the stories one day in heaven.

Adventist schools are also praying for the cities. At Hillside Christian School, a one-room school in Wisconsin, the students began praying for the large cities in North America. Each day, they prayed for a different city. One student would pray for the homeless in the city. Another prayed for families. As a team, they took the needs of these cities to God in prayer and then checked off each city on the map.

Churches and schools, adults, children, and academy students are praying for the cities!

We believe that as we gather in spirit, praying in unity for the cities, God will be with us and hear our prayers. As you pray for each city, please ask God to bless the work of missionaries and Global Mission pioneers who are reaching out in some cities, and earnestly pray that He will provide workers to send to the many, many cities where there is no Adventist presence at all!

Prayer maps are available for download on the Mission to the Cities website. Visit missiontothecities.org/prayer-map-download to print them for yourself, your school, your prayer group, or your church.

Please join other prayer missionaries and pray your way around the world!

1. Ellen G. White, Manuscript 153, 1909.
2. Ellen G. White, "Go, Preach the Gospel," *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, November 17, 1910, 7.
3. Ellen G. White, Letter 168, 1909.

- 1 Tokyo's Shibuya Crossing, located at the mouth of Shibuya Station's Hachikō Exit, is one of the busiest thoroughfares in the world; it's thought that up to 2,500 people cross it at one time
- 2 Sharon uses the Mission to the Cities prayer map as a guide to pray for one city each day
- 3 Students at Hillside Christian School in Wisconsin began their prayer missionary journey by praying for the large cities in North America



2

Your generous and systematic mission offerings support outreach in large cities around the world. Please give at adventistmission.org/donate.

MISSION to the CITIES

Mission to the Cities is part of the "I Will Go" 2020–2025 strategic focus voted by the General Conference of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Global Mission supports Mission to the Cities by making disciples among urban, unreached people groups. Through your sacrificial giving, funding is provided to support pioneers and urban centers of influence in starting new groups of believers.

- ▶ To learn more, visit MissiontotheCities.org.
- ▶ To donate, visit Global-Mission.org/giving.



3



Watch "Pray Your Way Around the World" at m360.tv/s2136.

Flowing to Unwatered Lands



Have you checked out the issuu app yet? Find past issues of *Mission 360°* magazine.

The Seventh-day Adventist Church is known worldwide for its mission outreach, and your mission offerings are the workhorse of these efforts. These offerings do the heavy lifting, the foundation laying, the repair, and the renovation of the basic structure of the church's work around the world. Without the mission offerings, all the other structures and systems built upon it could crumble.

Your mission offerings are like a life-giving river with tributaries flowing around the world, carrying refreshing water to mission fields.

Sometimes we want to give to a specific project or put our offerings toward something special that stirs our hearts. We see the results. We feel satisfied.

Giving to the mission offerings may not be as glamorous as giving to a specific, well-advertised project or program.

But wait! If these projects didn't have mission offerings to sustain them, they would never happen.

So, what happens to our tithes and offerings? Well, when we return 10 percent of our income as a tithe to God, the Adventist Church uses it to support pastors and evangelists, as well as some teachers and other workers involved in spreading the gospel.

On the front lines of mission, the tithe is *not* used to fund orphanages, schools, or health programs, and it doesn't cover miscellaneous operational expenses either. The mission offerings covers these expenses!

You see, our mission offerings fund what can't be funded through the tithe. So when mission giving falls, work gets cut back worldwide. Mission projects falter. The movement stutters. None of us

want this to happen, so our mission offerings help ensure that mission work operates continuously around the world.

Want to see how our giving impacts people around the globe? *Mission 360°* magazines and TV programs, *Mission Spotlight*, and the *Mission* quarterlies offer regular updates on mission work worldwide. These stories take you to dozens of countries to see what Adventists are doing in places you may have never even heard of.

And what about the Thirteenth Sabbath Offering, which began in 1912? For many years, it was an overflow offering. Once money was raised to meet the budget set to fund the mission program, any extra—the overflow—was used to support a special project chosen for that quarter. However, during a recession in the 1970s, there was no overflow offering. So church leaders voted to always send 25 percent of the offering collected on the thirteenth Sabbath to support specific projects for each division on a rotational basis.

Through your Thirteenth Sabbath Offerings, you have helped build schools, dormitories, hospitals, clinics, and church buildings; launched mission boats; and set up shelters for children's Sabbath Schools, printing presses, universities, and more—altogether, more than a thousand projects. And because tithe money can't be used for buildings, the Thirteenth Sabbath Offerings have frequently been used for construction projects.

All of this could never have happened without the Holy Spirit's leading and your regular, faithful support of the mission offerings. We encourage you to join Adventists everywhere to prayerfully consider what you can do to keep a faithful river of mission offerings bringing life-giving water to mission fields around the world.



Watch "Flowing to Unwatered Lands" at m360.tv/s2015.

Please give your weekly mission offerings during Sabbath School, by scanning this QR code, or by visiting adventistmission.org/donate.





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Reach the World Next Door



Beth Thomas is a freelance writer and editor living in the United States with her husband and two children.

In 1992, God placed a burden for the people of Cambodia on Scott and Julie Griswold's hearts. They talked about their desire to serve overseas someday with Judy Aitken, a missionary in Thailand who in 1995 founded Adventist Southeast Asia Projects, now Advocates for Southeast Asians and the Persecuted (ASAP) Ministries, in Berrien Springs, Michigan.

Judy approached the Griswolds on the night of Julie's graduation from Andrews University with a serious request—volunteers were needed in Cambodian refugee camps; would they be willing to go? They began praying in earnest. If the Lord wanted them to serve abroad, He would have to work out the logistics.

Provisionally, the conference sponsoring Scott's graduate work at the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary released him from his sponsorship, and within three months, the Griswolds were working among the Cambodian refugees in Thailand. This led to a 16-year ministry abroad for Scott and Julie, 10 of which Scott served as the director of the Global Mission Buddhist Study Center (now called the Global Mission Center for East-Asian Religions). They praise God for that "open door to the most exciting adventure humans are allowed—leading the unreached to Christ!"

In 2012, Scott began working for ASAP as their associate director, primarily focused on the mission

field in North America. According to statistics listed on the ASAP website, “one million legal immigrants move to the United States every year. Close to one million international students are studying in North America right now. There are refugees struggling to survive in almost every global city. Many of them are from highly unreached countries like Afghanistan, Bhutan, and Somalia, and they are wide open to friendly care.”

Recognizing the incredible opportunity, Scott says, “God led us to purchase 26 acres on the edge of Houston, Texas, the fifth largest metro area in the United States and home to many unreached people groups. We’re surrounded by many of the ‘least reached’—people from Buddhist and other backgrounds that have come as refugees, immigrants, and international students.”

This property has allowed the Griswolds, in collaboration with the Texas Conference of Seventh-day Adventists and ASAP, to do a variety of things. One of their first projects was opening a training center, Reach the World Next Door, to train and equip members interested in reaching out to people of other cultures and faith backgrounds.

Scott has developed a cross-cultural kit at Reach the World Next Door to help church members find and befriend people in their communities from a Southeast Asian background and introduce them to Jesus. Churches, conferences, training programs, and schools can use the material to further their efforts in providing hope to those around them. The course is also available online for continuing education credit through the Adventist Learning Community.*

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the go with the
issuu app!



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The Houston property also provides a sanctuary outside the city where students or church members can come to rest and recharge. Gardens, fruit trees, a pond, and a chapel in the woods provide a retreat. “Our most special days at our place are when we have Day at the Farm, when people from the city get to plant, weed, or harvest,” Julie says. “We feed them a plant-based delicious lunch and have some fun, educational family activities.”

Recently, Julie and Scott had a divine appointment that involved the Day at the Farm program. One of their friends who works in the Middle East went to Thailand for a conference. While at a restaurant, he struck up a conversation with a Japanese mother and her daughter. He learned that the husband was a Japanese consul general, and the family would soon be relocating to Houston.

“My friend immediately thought of our ministry . . . and sent an email to connect the two of us,” Julie says. “The Japanese lady responded immediately, eager to make an American friend in a new country. We met them for the first time in a park in downtown Houston. It was awkward at first, but within minutes, we connected. Soon they were eager to visit our home. They decided to come and experience a Day at the Farm.”

The new friends loved every minute of their time there, and while they haven’t been able to visit often due to the father’s embassy duties, they have continued to grow close. “Last year, the mother’s father died. She came, and we cried together,” Julie says. “I was able to comfort her and share my testimony of losing my mother. I asked if I could pray. This precious lady, who has no Christian

background, readily agreed.” This occasion has led to other opportunities for spiritual dialogue.

Local church members have also experienced the joy of reaching the world next door through their interaction with the Griswolds’ ministry. Kimberly Medina, a member of the Houston Spanish Northwest Seventh-day Adventist Church, shared that her congregation, family, and friends adopted an outreach project for vulnerable children last December. They filled more than 200 shoeboxes with hygiene products, school supplies, and toys, and then colorfully decorated them.

Kimberly called Reach the World Next Door to ask about recommendations for at-risk neighborhoods. Scott directed them to an apartment complex where there are many Middle Eastern and African refugees.

“We piled into buses and took some instruments to help us sing Christmas carols,” Kimberly says. “The children lined up in long, messy lines. We sang. We played games. They absolutely loved it! I helped lead one of the games, and so I could see their happiness close up. I enjoyed their company, too.

“Every time they lost a game, they just laughed and laughed about it. That was one of the most important lessons I learned from them. I don’t know what they went through after fleeing countries like Afghanistan, Bhutan, and the Democratic Republic of Congo. It must have been terrible. All I know is the joy and love I felt when singing along with them, when playing, and when I helped give out the gifts. The children’s faces were so filled with joy and thankfulness. It was priceless.”

Kimberly says she can’t wait to go back and create more memories with the families there. This is precisely why Reach the World Next Door exists. “You can gain experience and knowledge from reaching out to refugees, immigrants, and international students so you can be a friend to people of any culture, any religion, any ethnic background, wherever you go,” says Scott.

As Ellen White states in the book *Evangelism*, “God in His providence has brought men to our very doors and thrust them, as it were, into our arms, that they might learn the truth, and be qualified to do a work we could not do in getting the light before men of other tongues” (p. 570).

Will you join us in praying for the Griswolds’ ministry? Perhaps you sense God calling you to receive more training in reaching immigrants and refugees in your community. Consider training for missions by doing mission work with the Reach the World Next Door program.

* adventistlearningcommunity.com/courses/rwnd

Reach the World Next Door supports Mission to the Cities, part of the “I Will Go” 2020–2025 strategic focus voted by the General Conference of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Reach the World Next Door is funded by the Texas Conference, Southwestern Union Conference, North American Division, General Conference, and ASAP. For more information and resources, please visit their website, reachtheworldnextdoor.com.

- 1 A group of trainees from the Reach the World Next Door program meet for lunch in the park
- 2 Scott and Julie Griswold, center, stand with a group of Reach the World Next Door trainees
- 3 Reach the World Next Door participants visit a family in the Houston, Texas, area
- 4 After years of working overseas, God called Scott and Julie Griswold to Houston, Texas, to train others to reach the world next door





Miraculous Escape from Mitandi

Robert Pifer (1935–2009) was born and raised in Pennsylvania, United States. He was a pastor, treasurer, president, and diplomat. When the events in this story took place, he was the director of the Rwenzori Mission Station in Mitandi in western Uganda. His wife, Gerd, a nurse, was born in 1936 to Magdalon and Kezia Lind, pioneer missionaries to Uganda. She is currently living in Canada. The Pifers had five children.

During most of the time that Robert and Gerd Pifer served as missionaries at the Rwenzori Mission Station in mid-western Uganda, they were surrounded by the ravages of war. Commonly referred to as the Rwenzururu movement, the conflict resulted from the injustices the Bakonzo tribe had suffered under the control of the Toro Kingdom, or Batooro people.

Kirsten Alnæs, a Norwegian social anthropologist who spent several years living among the Bakonzo, wrote, “Tooro rule had brought much suffering for the BaKonzo. The BaTooro officials treated their subjects with disdain, arrogance and direct cruelty. . . . Tooro chiefs exacted tribute and forced labor from the BaKonzo. . . . Moreover, large tracts of land were declared the possession of the Tooro King. . . . All of this . . . resulted in the Toro Kingdom referring to the Bakonzo . . . as ‘apes, baboons, gorillas, insects, dogs, flies and pigs.’”

The war had started after failed negotiations with Toro Kingdom leadership and the outgoing colonial government in early 1962. It continued with the newly elected government of independent Uganda after October 9, 1962. During March and April 1964, the Bakonzo pressured the infant government and the Toro Kingdom for equal treatment. Instead of solving the problem amicably, the government supported the Toro Kingdom in hunting, torturing, and killing the Bakonzo.

On June 8, 1964, a band of Batooro with spears surrounded the Pifer family at their Mitandi residence. The warriors threatened to kill the Pifers



Robert and Gerd Pifer in 1957, courtesy of Leif Lind

if they didn’t leave the mission within four days and stop aiding the Bakonzo.

The Pifers had helped many Bakonzo to escape across the mountains to Bundibugyo. At the time of the Batooro visit, they were hiding three Bakonzo families in the mission compound. These families were those of Yowasi Mukirania, the headmaster of Mitandi Junior Secondary School; Ibrahim Balihabuka, a church member; and Yowasi Isingoma-Nguru Obote, who worked on the compound with Pastor Pifer.

As soon as the angry Batooro left the Rwenzori Mission Station, Pastor Pifer sprang into action, making plans to evacuate the campus. With the help of Pastor Stanley Kyambadde, a Muganda tribesman who served as a pastor of Kihimbo Adventist Church in the town of Fort Portal, Pastor Pifer chartered heavy commercial vehicles owned by a Ugandan-Asian businessman to evacuate the families to Fort Portal. He wrote letters for each driver to present in case they were stopped and questioned, explaining that the people in their vehicles were mission workers who were being transferred. And he made arrangements with Felix Rwambarali Akiki, the secretary-general of Toro District administration, to have the families of Mr. Balihabuka and Mr. Isingoma-Nguru Obote escorted by armed police from Fort Portal to a refugee camp.

On the fourth day after the warning, the mission station workers loaded the belongings of the Pifer and Bakonzo families into the large



Yona Balyage, a professor in educational administration and management, serves as director of Quality Assurance at the University of Eastern Africa in Kenya. The following story is adapted from his article in the online Encyclopedia of Seventh-day Adventists. We invite you to visit encyclopedia.adventist.org to enjoy more stories about Adventist missionaries.

vehicles. Around nine o'clock at night, 20 minutes after leaving the Mitandi campus, the convoy of trucks met and began passing the mobs of organized warriors who were headed to the station to carry out the executions. The vigilantes, fully armed with machetes, knives, arrows, and spears and singing war songs, didn't detect that the people inside the trucks were Bakonzo because the drivers, representing local Ugandan tribes, were also partly Indian. As the vehicles made their way along the muddy roads, Pastor Pifer drove his truck behind them so that he could observe all that was happening. Gerd drove a private car with the Pifers' three children.

Once the families of Mr. Balihabuka and Mr. Isingoma-Nguru Obote were in the care of the armed police in Fort Portal, the Mukirania family proceeded without any human protection to Ikoba Adventist Church near Masindi, in Bunyoro Kingdom. They arrived at six-thirty on the morning of June 12. The Pifer family moved to a government-owned house in Fort Portal, under the orders of the secretary-general of Toro District Administration, where they stayed for a year until their furlough to Norway and the United States in 1965.

With the evacuation, Mitandi ceased to serve as the headquarters of the Rwenzori Mission Station. In August 1964, Pastor Thorkild Pedersen from Norway replaced Pastor Pifer as director of the Rwenzori Mission Station, using a hired house at Ibonde near Nyakasura School, which was being run by Anglican missionaries.

When the Pifer family returned from furlough in 1966, they were called to the Uganda Field headquarters at Kireka, where Pastor Pifer served as secretary/treasurer and Gerd as a nurse. Mr. Mukirania served as a pastor for almost two years before he was sent to Bugema Missionary College for ministerial training. He later became a pastor and field president. His daughter Zipporah Mupaghasi served as business manager and lecturer at Bugema Adventist College, now university. Other children of the rescued families have served as teachers in the ministries of education and health of the Republic of Uganda and as elders in the church.

A glimpse into the servant hearts of missionaries Robert and Gerd Pifer

Pastor Pifer was a dynamic and enthusiastic preacher of the gospel. His sermons centered on the Ten Commandments and how they relate to salvation and Christian living. Besides his usual sermons, he wrote booklets on church doctrines and supplied them to church and community members wherever he preached.

In addition to his role as Mitandi Mission Station director from 1961 to 1965, he performed all maintenance required on the compound. He took time to play soccer with the students and faculty once every two weeks. During his time as director, several young people in the Mitandi area joined the church because he was "down to earth" and met them on their level.

The Pifers were generous and friendly. They invited families from around the mission headquarters to join their family's birthday celebrations. They also supplied food to the poor in their community regardless of their creed, language, or background.

Gerd treated many patients who had been injured in the hostilities between the Bakonzo and Batooro tribes. She sometimes had to be driven by her husband at night for more than 12 miles (20 kilometers) to take war victims to a hospital with better facilities. Before the war, she attended to people with diseases of all types, both day and night, and taught them how to care for themselves and their families. People trusted her because she treated them with love and kindness.

Pastor Robert and Gerd's exemplary lives of faith in action are vividly remembered by Seventh-day Adventist church members on Mount Rwenzori. Now scattered all around Uganda and the world, serving the church in public and private sectors, the members eagerly await the day when they will be reunited with each other and the Pifers on the resurrection morning.



ESDA ENCYCLOPEDIA OF SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTISTS

More than 3,000 articles and 7,500 photographs featuring Adventist missionaries, evangelists, institutions, events, and beliefs.

encyclopedia.adventist.org



Update on Mission Unusual—Tokyo!



Ricky Oliveras,
Office of
Adventist
Mission

Beginning in 2016, the Adventist church in Japan sought General Conference support for initiating new church planting work across Japan. After several years of discussions and seminars, in 2019 the General Conference and Northern Asia-Pacific Division entered into a partnership with Japan to create Mission Unusual—Tokyo! It's a disciple-making movement designed to share the light of Jesus with millions of unreached people living in this massive urban area and form many new groups of believers.

Tokyo is recognized by the United Nations as the world's largest urban area, so this movement is an ambitious effort. A team of church-planting missionaries and local pastors are on the ground, working closely with Japanese church leaders and learning how best to share Jesus with Japanese

people. They spend hours each day preparing for the work within central Tokyo.

It's not just the population size that makes outreach hard. There are many barriers to religion too. The Japanese society is largely secular, but their values, worldview, and language are shaped by eastern philosophies. Another challenge is overcoming the isolation of the older generation. Reaching out to them and showing them compassion can be tricky.

Missionaries such as Yure and Lais Gramacho have been creating connections with their neighbors. Simple tasks such as shopping, visiting the local park, and practicing their growing Japanese vocabulary with strangers on the street are all opportunities to connect.

The leadership team gathers each Sabbath to pray, study God's Word, eat, laugh, share challenges, and seek the Holy Spirit together.

Amazing things are happening in Tokyo. Over time, the ministry team will grow as plans are carried out to bring in Global Mission pioneers, urban centers of influence, volunteers, and tentmakers. The challenge of ministering to the world's largest city can sometimes seem too big, but God's power can overcome all barriers.

Introducing the Mission Unusual—Tokyo! team



From Brazil: Yure and Lais Gramacho and their children
Pastor Gramacho is the program director.



From Japan: Nozomu and Sachiko Obara and their children
Pastor Obara is the associate program director.



From Japan: Ben and Madoka Nichols

Pastor Nichols is the assistant director for developing contextualized discipling curricula and resources.



From the United States: Sergio and Raquel Quevedo and their children

Pastor Quevedo is the assistant director for church planting.



From Brazil: Daniel and Svitlana Meder and their daughter

Pastor Meder is the assistant director for young adult ministry and urban outreach.

Please pray!

Pray that God will help our Mission Unusual—Tokyo! missionaries

- ▶ learn the Japanese language,
- ▶ build a strong, united team,
- ▶ make friends and disciples.

Pray for God's guidance and blessing in Mission Unusual—Tokyo!

- ▶ for the planning of urban centers of influence,
- ▶ for the church planting training of local Japanese volunteers,
- ▶ for the development of a contextualized discipleship curriculum.

Millions of dollars are needed to reach Tokyo's masses for Jesus, and every dollar counts. If God is moving on your heart to support this unprecedented program, please give at Global-Mission.org/giving.



Watch "Update on Mission Unusual—Tokyo!" at m360.tv/s2141.

Offering Hope to Hanoi



In 2018, Jannie Bekker, a genteel South African, was deployed to Vietnam's capital city, Hanoi, with US\$2 million and the momentous task of establishing the Seventh-day Adventist Church's first urban center of influence in this Southeast Asian country.



Bekker, however, struggled to find a suitable property in Hanoi. The asking price for a vacant lot topped \$2 million and often approached \$3 million to \$4 million.

Bekker prayed as he made trip after trip to Hanoi from the Singapore-based headquarters of the Adventist Church's Southeast Asia Union Mission, where he worked* as special assistant to the president.

Then suddenly, someone offered a prime plot of land with a new seven-story building for only \$1.8 million—and the rest is history.

Bekker beamed with joy on May 22, 2018, as Adventist Church leaders inaugurated the community center. "God came through in a more miraculous way than I ever, ever anticipated," Bekker said. "He gave us more than what we prayed for."

Vietnam is one of the most visited countries for tourism in Southeast Asia and offers its visitors many exciting things. From the breathtaking vistas of Ha Long Bay to promising business opportunities in the city, Hanoi is the place to be for tourists and locals alike.

Within its population of nine million, this city has only a small number of Adventists. Now, in 2021, the urban center of influence called Forward Venture is providing an opportunity to reach more people for Christ.

"On our first floor, we have a bookstore that is open to the community, where people can come in and purchase books that can help them grow in their walk with the Lord," said the center coordinator, Dale Tunnel. "We have an English language school where we are able to build relationships with individuals. We're reaching out to the community by ministering to children who need help with their education. The church meets here in the building on a regular basis."

From healthy cooking classes to a running club that meets every Sunday morning, the staff at Forward Venture has a lot of fun with their community. The center's activities have allowed them to build strong partnerships and even friendships with government officials.

"An opportunity has arisen for us to partner with the Religious Affairs Committee of Vietnam," Tunnel said. "We're teaching English there in their building to 28 of their staff members—all the way from receptionists and secretaries to the top of the Religious Affairs Committee. We look forward to how that door can open in the future."

Through these activities, the center's workers and volunteers hope to be a shining example of Christ's method of ministry. They want to share and introduce Christ's love to everyone.

Forward Venture, Tunnel said, "is a place that provides space and opportunity for the church to meet and mingle with people; to build relationships, friendships, and trust; and when the opportunity arises, to offer them a relationship with Jesus Christ."

With a growing demand for their services, this ministry is also facing some serious challenges.

"The challenges are real," Tunnel said. "It's a city of nine million people. The church here in the Hanoi area is small, so we don't have a lot of manpower to draw from to work in the center here. We need volunteers to fulfill the calls that we put out. We need volunteers from the local church to partner with us in the ministry. We have called out for international volunteers to come as well. We haven't had a lot of response from that yet. And so we're still needing people to come and do ministry here from abroad."

Despite challenges and setbacks, God is still using His workers to bless others. Some of the students in the center's English class have gotten a glimpse of Christ's character through their teachers.

"They are all really patient," student Tony said. "That's what I cannot see in some other language centers."

Story by
Andrew McChesney,
Mission quarterly editor, Office of Adventist Mission, and **Edward Rodriguez**, secretary and writer for communication, Southern Asia-Pacific Division.



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Another student, Garry, said, “I feel refreshed because the teachers here are friendly and generous, and they try to be close with their students.”

“To see people come to the language classes and then start coming to church, you know that God is at work, that He is doing things,” Tunnel said. “God can work miracles. So we’re looking forward to seeing what He has in store for us.”

Please pray for this urban center of influence in Vietnam. Pray that the Lord of the harvest will open hearts and send more laborers. Pray that hearts in Hanoi will be touched by the Savior’s love shown through the center’s staff. And pray that more centers in Vietnam will be able to open soon. And please continue to support projects such as this one through your donations to Global Mission!

*Sadly, Jannie Bekker passed away in April 2021.

The Need in Vietnam

Population: 93,000,000

Adventists: 13,817*

The Adventist membership is less than 0.02 percent of the population. Millions have not had an opportunity to experience Jesus!

* Church membership as of 2019. Office of Archives, Statistics, and Research, “Global Mission Table 2,” 2020 Annual Statistical Report (Silver Spring, MD: General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 2020), 105.

How you can help

Please help further Adventist mission work in Vietnam and Southeast Asia through your mission offerings (adventistmission.org/donate) and by supporting Global Mission pioneers and urban centers of influence in the 10/40 Window (Global-Mission.org/giving).



Please remember us in your will and trusts. Visit Global-Mission.org/PlannedGiving or call **800.648.5824**.



Watch “Offering Hope to Hanoi” at m360.tv/s21311.



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- 1 The center’s running club on a Sunday morning run
- 2 Children’s Sabbath School class
- 3 Center coordinator Dale Tunnell teaches English to young professionals
- 4 A street view of the facade of the seven-story Forward Venture center of influence in Hanoi, Vietnam



The Love Waiting on the Other Side



Originally from southern California, **Rachel Langford** serves as the fifth-grade teacher at Delap Seventh-day Adventist School in Majuro, Marshall Islands. Next year, she plans to return to the Nursing program at Walla Walla University to become a pediatric nurse.

I remember sitting in my seventh-grade class listening to a returned student missionary (SM) share experiences from his year of service. It was then that I knew that I, too, wanted to serve one day.

When I began my freshman year at Walla Walla University, I heard many more returned SMs talk about how their time overseas positively impacted their lives. The joy they expressed affirmed my desire to volunteer, and I reached out to the university's mission office to begin the process.

In the spring, the Walla Walla University hosted a special vespers program for the student missionaries going out the next year. When I arrived at the church, I was told to choose a flag to carry during the ceremony, ideally, for the country I'd be serving in. I had no idea what country I was going to serve in. With much uncertainty, I chose the Marshallese flag. Four months later, I was preparing to depart for Majuro in the Marshall Islands!

I was first given the date of July 11 to fly out. But less than a week before the flight, I received a message saying I couldn't be included in the group that would begin quarantine to enter the Marshall Islands. I was placed on a list for August 22 but was later informed that I couldn't be part of that group either.

Finally, the date of August 29 was confirmed. I felt many different emotions. I was excited to have a new flight scheduled, but part of me wondered whether I would actually leave the United States. But with God's amazing promises and lots of hard goodbyes, it all worked out, and now I'm on my home island for the year.

The process of getting here took three and a half weeks, and I had an extremely difficult time. I spent part of the time in quarantine in a hotel in Honolulu and the other part in a government facility in Kwajalein, which is part of the Marshall Islands. Apart from my friends and loved ones, I sat isolated in a room, stuck in my thoughts. I had never felt so much doubt. One night on the phone, I asked my dad, "If this wasn't a part of God's plan for me, I wouldn't be here, right?" I constantly found myself questioning His guidance.

It was only after arriving on the island and meeting my students that it became clear to me:



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no matter how much Satan tries to test me, no matter how many trials I have to face, and no matter how tired or stressed I become, God is trustworthy, and He does have a plan for me. He had led me to exactly where He wanted me to be.

Within a few hours of being in the first class with my students, they sang a song called “Trust in You” by Lauren Daigle, a contemporary Christian singer and songwriter. The song is about trusting God even when He doesn’t remove the difficulties we face or answer all our questions.

My students and I often sing this song together now, and it’s become my daily prayer to trust God with everything in my life. It’s a struggle, but I’m growing. The entire time I was stuck in quarantine, all I wanted was to be on the island with my kids. What was so amazing to me was to hear that they were even more excited for me to come. And now that I’m here, being showered with love, I reflect on those three and a half weeks and see that it was so worth it!

Jeremiah 29:11 says, “ ‘For I know the plans I have for you,’ declares the Lord, ‘plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you a hope and a future’ ” (NIV²).

Adapted with permission from the stories on the Guam-Micronesia Mission’s website.

1 Scripture quotations marked NIV are from THE HOLY BIBLE, NEW INTERNATIONAL VERSION®. Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984, 2011 by Biblica, Inc.® Used by permission. All rights reserved worldwide.

- 1 Rachel with her student Oprah
- 2 Rachel (*left*) with other student missionaries serving on the island of Majuro

Is God calling you to serve at Palau Mission Academy?

Every year, the operation of Guam-Micronesia Mission schools depends heavily on volunteers. To help them continue their mission, please prayerfully consider how God may be calling you to serve. To see the open positions, visit the Guam-Micronesia Mission website at gmmsda.org/missions/open-positions, and check back regularly for future positions.



If you’re interested in being a volunteer, visit the Adventist Volunteer Service website at AdventistVolunteers.org.



Watch video stories about Adventist Volunteer Service missionaries at m360.tv/avs.



Story by **Ricky Oliveras**,
Office of Adventist Mission



Animation by **Diogo Godoy**

CHILDREN'S STORY

Saved Three Times

Li spent his younger days as a construction worker in Taiwan. With an ambition to advance his career, he began working every day—day after day, week after week. The constant stress became so overwhelming that he started drinking, smoking, and gambling to cope. Li's lifestyle put a strain on his family, and his wife left him.

Not long after she left, Li had a stroke. He had an emergency operation to remove a blood clot, and it saved his life.

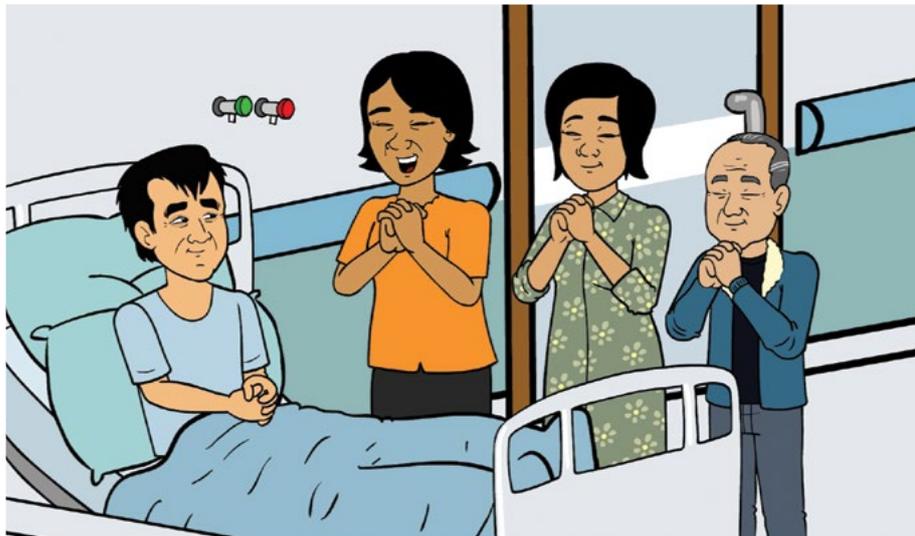
But all of this wasn't enough for him to make changes. Li continued living the same lifestyle as before.



One day, Li had a conversation with his cousin. His cousin shared God's guidance for living healthfully and the hope that Jesus could bring to his life. Li rejected the ideas but joked that he would join his cousin at church someday.

Twenty years later, Li was at a hospital again. He had had a heart attack, and he was fortunate to be alive. He remembered his cousin's words, and he cried out for God to be with him.

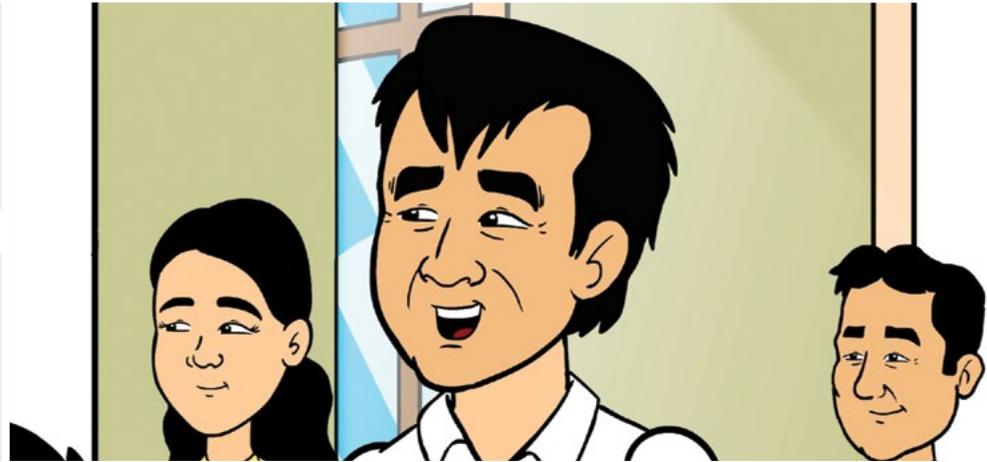
While in the hospital, Li contacted the local Seventh-day Adventist church. Members came to pray for him and thanked God for his miraculous survival.





The church had an urban center of influence, a building located in the city where the church members worked to help meet people's needs and introduce them to Jesus. The members provided Li with care, companionship, supplies, healthy food, and prayers, which turned his life around. He went with them to deliver supplies to people's homes, attended Bible studies, and began to feel a new sense of hope in his life.

One Sabbath morning at church, Li heard a song that reminded him of a song he used to sing when he was a child. He felt the Holy Spirit touching his heart, and at that moment, he accepted the Lord and decided to be baptized. He knew that this time, God had saved his life in a different way.



Li now serves as a deacon in church and is an active participant at the urban center of influence.

In 2018, a portion of the Thirteenth Sabbath Offering was used to build several urban centers of influence across Taiwan. Through the work of these centers, people like Li have come to accept Jesus into their hearts.

Please pray for urban centers of influence across this region, and thank you for your contributions to the Thirteenth Sabbath Offering!



More Children's Mission Stories

Find dozens of inspiring mission stories for children at AdventistMission.org/childrens-mission-quarterly.



Watch this story in action at [m360.tv/s2145!](http://m360.tv/s2145)

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NOVEMBER

~~13~~

*It's not too
late to give!*

ANNUAL
SACRIFICE
OFFERING

WHAT COULD YOU SACRIFICE FOR MISSION?

What if for one week you saved all the money you would have spent on things you didn't really need, and you gave it to the Annual Sacrifice Offering for Global Mission to reach people groups who don't know Jesus? Your gift could help start urban centers of influence in some of the largest cities of the world and support Global Mission pioneers in starting new groups of believers among the unreached.

So, what are you willing to give up for mission?

If you want to help share Jesus with unreached people, please mark your tithe envelope *Annual Sacrifice Offering* or visit Global-Mission.org/mysacrifice. Every donation makes a difference.



GLOBAL MISSION

From the Office of Adventist Mission, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists
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