

mission



FROM THE OFFICE OF ADVENTIST MISSION VOLUME 8 • NUMBER 2

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EDITORIAL

When we think of the exponential growth of the early Christian church, we naturally think of great preaching, focused church planting, and the evidence of signs and wonders. These activities were crucial. But extensive research by sociologist Rodney Stark shows how selfless love and care for the community also fueled the growth of the early church. At the time, respect for human life and the dignity of all was totally foreign to Roman thinking. The idea of God loving the world, Stark says, “would have puzzled an educated pagan.”

Stark points out that during times of plague and sickness—pandemics like COVID-19—pagan priests would flee the cities to the safety of the countryside. However, Christians remained to help the sick and suffering. The second-century Christian writer Tertullian is quoted as having stated: “It is our care of the helpless, our practice of loving-kindness that brands us in the eyes of many of our opponents. ‘Only look,’ they say, ‘look how they love one another!’” (*The Apology*, 39). The emperor Julian, known as Julian the Apostate because he renounced Christianity, was disgusted with the pagan priests. He wrote, “[T]he impious Galileans support not only their poor but ours as well, everyone can see that our people lack aid from us.”

Of course, the early Christians were merely following the example of their Lord, who looked on the crowds with compassion (Matthew 9:36). He mingled with people, showed them sympathy, ministered to their needs, won their confidence, and bid them follow Him (Ellen G. White, *The Ministry of Healing*, 143). This method of ministry continues to serve as the blueprint for the church’s Global Mission initiative, which this year celebrates its 30th anniversary.

When the General Conference Session established the Global Mission initiative in 1990, the church had just over 5 million members worldwide. Today, there are more than 22 million. In 1990, there were some 33,000 established churches. Today the number is closer to 90,000. In the past 30 years, we’ve seen many new territories entered, new people groups reached. We thank God for this tremendous growth, the phenomenal record of Global Mission’s church planting, and millions of changed lives. We thank God for gifted preachers and missionaries, our educational and health work, our publishing and media ministries, and so much more. But most of all, we’re grateful for church members who make it their daily way of life to put Christ’s method of ministry into practice. That’s what grew the early

church, and that’s what grows the church today.

As you read this edition of *Mission 360°*, I hope you will be inspired and challenged by what you read. And I want to personally thank you for your continued prayers and your faithful giving to mission offerings and to Global Mission. As you’ll see in this edition, you are making a difference!

Gary Krause
Adventist Mission director



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ABOUT OUR COVER PHOTO . . .

PHOTO BY RICKY OLIVERAS

On a recent trip to India, I visited Spicer Adventist University. As I walked around the campus, I met many students along the way. Most of them were enrolled at the university, but this young girl obviously wasn't. We exchanged smiles, and I asked whether I could take her picture. After a few clicks, I showed her the photos, and she gave me a big smile!

From the Office of Adventist Mission

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VOLUME 8, NUMBER 2

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Grandpa's Legacy



Anthony WagenerSmith is an associate director for the North American Division Evangelism Institute, serving in the areas of evangelism and church planting and as a professor in the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary at Andrews University.

Lewis Stubbs, my maternal grandfather, left a legacy of mission in my life and in the lives of countless others. The testimony of his life demonstrates how everyday believers can make disciples and plant churches. He is remembered not for his theological education (he had none) or material resources (he had few), but as one who walked deeply with God.

During World War II, Grandpa joined the United States Merchant Marines and traveled the world on military support ships as a chief purser and medic. He wasn't a Christian when he went to war, but after surviving several harrowing experiences, he came to believe that God was protecting him. In gratitude, he committed his life to serving the Lord.

After the war, he settled in Washington, DC, where he met a young woman named Virginia Ashton. Virginia was a Seventh-day Adventist, and Grandpa was attracted to both her beautiful smile and her faith. He was baptized shortly before they were married.

Grandpa became a pharmacist and for a while worked at Adventist hospitals in Stoneham, Massachusetts, and Orlando, Florida. But he had a dream of owning his own drugstore and using his profession to witness for God. In 1959 he built Stubbs Pharmacy on the outskirts of Orlando. His faith in God led him to be the first business to openly serve African-Americans in that city.

Grandpa enjoyed his time in Florida. He had five healthy children, served as an elder at the Forest Lake Church, and had many witnessing opportunities through his business. He had no intention of leaving.

But the Lord was about to disrupt Grandpa's life. When he turned 50, the Holy Spirit filled his heart with a passion to plant a church in a "dark county," an old term referring to a county with no Adventist church. Grandpa and Virginia prayed for guidance, and God lead them to Westminster, South Carolina.

In Westminster, Grandpa and Grandma nurtured relationships with the people



who frequented their store. They opened a "We Care Center," providing food, clothing, and basic medical screening to the community. They offered Bible studies to anyone interested in learning about God's Word. It took time, much prayer, and a consistent loving presence, but eventually several families requested baptism.

Grandpa and Grandma then rented a store in which to start a church. To attract visitors, they placed directional signs around town in addition to inviting those they had already formed relationships with. It worked, and soon a company of new believers was organized! In 1982, the congregation built a church, and Grandpa served as their volunteer pastor.

Grandpa and Grandma praised God for blessing their ministry in Westminster, but Grandpa wasn't sure his church planting days were over. "If the Lord fills this church, we're going to do this again and plant another one," he said.

Fast-forward 20 years. My grandparents are now in their 70s, the Westminster church is filled, and once again God calls Grandpa to plant a church.

This time they moved to Clemson University in South Carolina, where there was no Adventist



GLOBAL MISSION

Global Mission supports thousands of church planters called pioneers in starting new groups of believers in areas and among people groups where there is no Adventist presence. Their ministry wouldn't be possible without your donations and prayers. Thank you for your support!

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presence. Determined to reach young people, Grandpa and Grandma braved the thick humidity of a hot summer day and went to Clemson University, where students were lined up to register for classes. They brought a cooler stuffed with ice-cold juice bottles wrapped in personalized printed invitations to a small



group meeting in their living room. Most young people probably didn't think it was desirable to visit seniors they'd never met to talk about God. But God blessed Grandpa and Grandma's efforts, and today there is a church in that area as well.

Someone once asked Grandpa what advice he would give to those wanting to plant a church. "If you want to start a church, you've got to pray your way through and find the Lord's will," he replied. "Then be outgoing and friendly, and faithfully visit your new interests," he said with great emphasis. "There's a great joy for all who step out by faith in the work of the Lord."

Around their 65th wedding anniversary, I spent a special day at my grandparents' home, joining them in their daily schedule. After waking up, I accompanied them on their long walk around the neighborhood. Winding their way along a forested path, they stopped halfway across a wooden bridge. As their custom was, they sang the doxology, prayed together, and kissed.

Grandpa and Grandma loved God, each other, and people. In an interview with my grandfather when he was 90, I asked him about the challenges and breakthroughs in his church-planting ministry. His closing reflections reflect the heart of a missionary.

Talking about his current church plant, he said, "We have single moms, ex-cons, professionals, burnt-out Christians, super conservatives, and those who are quite liberal, but praise the Lord, by God's grace, all are working happily together. May God bless you, Anthony, as you seek to follow Him in your life and ministry. Don't go for the formulas. Go for God!"

I will never forget the sound of a squeaky-hinged door opening and closing early in the morning at my grandparents' house when I was 12 years old. Rising to see what was going on, I walked outside at dawn to discover my



grandfather sitting on a log next to a small crackling fire with his brown leather-bound Bible in hand. Placing his hand on me, he said simple but confident words that still echo today: "Anthony, no matter how difficult things get in my life, I will always worship God."

In 2016, I spoke at Grandpa's funeral. As his coffin was lowered in the church cemetery adjacent to one of the churches he planted, it was clear to all that this 91-year-old man of God had left a rich legacy that would inspire our family and others for years to come. Not a set of rituals to be replicated or methods to be multiplied, but a deep faith expressed in loving service to humanity and God.

- 1 Grandpa and me at his 90th birthday party.
- 2 Lewis Stubbs, chief purser and medic, WWII.
- 3 Stubbs Pharmacy.
- 4 Grandpa and Grandma with their five children.
- 5 Grandpa and Grandma's prayer bridge.



Religion in a Slice of Tahini Bread

Are you a believer?” the man asked. My husband nodded. “And you too?” I also nodded. The man was busily folding individual sized pizza boxes for the next order, his white apron matching his neatly cropped salt-and-pepper hair. “I used to go to church, but I don’t anymore. Not for 20, 22 years now. I’m a believer too.”

Minutes earlier, my husband and I had been walking through the Armenian section of town looking for a curtain shop. We were excitedly fixing up our first home together and wanted to find the perfect curtains that matched our gray sofa set. After perusing some reasonable options, we started to walk back to our car. Then I remembered that I wanted tahini bread.

It was a little after two o’clock and I wasn’t sure whether the bakery I occasionally visited was still open, but I persuaded my husband to turn down a side road and check. It was open, but no tahini bread sat on the display shelf, so I asked the owner whether he had any.

“I don’t have any tahini bread, but I can make some for you,” Harry* replied with a friendly smile. “You look familiar. Have you been here before?”

I laughed. “Yes, I come here and order tahini bread to bring to the U.S.” I take tahini bread when I visit my mom and brother every summer.

I decided to order five. Harry invited us to wait on the bar stools by the window while he prepared them. About 10 minutes later, our order was ready.

As I rummaged around in my purse for change, he exchanged pleasantries with us. He first directed his attention to me, as he spoke about the current economic challenges the country was facing.

“You’re still here! Why?” he queried, remarking that anywhere else seemed like a better place to be right now.

“My husband is studying, so we will be here for a few more years,” I answered.

Harry turned to my husband. “What are you studying?”

“Theology,” he replied.

“So you are a believer then. I thought there was something a bit different about you.” Harry looked at us thoughtfully. He turned to me again. “I noticed it first in you, because I’ve seen you several times already, but I also saw it in your husband.”

The conversation then shifted to religious things. My husband, who naturally has the gift for connecting with strangers (unlike me), encouraged Harry as they spoke about what it means to be a true believer and the importance of God’s call to love others.

Harry and his wife had married young and moved to Scandinavia where, after they had three children together, she left him for another man. She had been a Christian also, and Harry determined that if this is what Christianity was all about, he didn’t want anything to do with it. My husband reminded him that we are all sinners, and we all make mistakes. Harry agreed, but was adamant about his decision to leave the church. He did, however, reiterate how he was always happy when he heard that someone was a believer. My husband invited him to church, but Harry declined, saying church wasn’t for him anymore.

We left the bakery in silence. I had tears in my eyes as I realized how God orchestrated a hankering for a sweet treat into a divine encounter. I had met Harry several times before, but this was the first time he had spoken about religious things. Though Harry had become jaded with the hypocrisy of people and religion, his heart still longed for God. He shared that he was tired of this world, that he believed we are living in the end times, and that he was waiting for Jesus to come back soon.

I used to be a very shy person who never spoke to strangers. Now I’m thankful for a husband who has the gift of talking to others and fearlessly sharing his faith. Please pray that we can be bold for God as we speak with those we meet and seek God’s help to live our lives in harmony with Bible truth. Pray that that we can keep a spiritual connection open with Harry as we continue to visit him at his bakery. As Jesus said, “I have other sheep, too, that are not in this sheepfold. I must bring them also. They will listen to my voice, and there will be one flock with one shepherd” (John 10:16, NLT).

*Name has been changed.



Maria Shajiei, a volunteer missionary in Lebanon, serves as the executive secretary to the president at Middle East University, where she also teaches in the English Language Institute. She grew up in the mission field and changes identity based on her mood, as she is Dutch-Mauritian by ethnicity, British by nationality, American and Middle Eastern by culture, and African by birthplace.



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- 1 Enjoying a traditional Lebanese meal.
- 2 Mini tahini bread.
- 3 My friend Marisa and me, *right*, painting the entrance wall at Middle East University.
- 4 Benya, a university student, and me, *left*, enjoying Lebanon's best homemade ice cream.



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.



BRAZIL

The Neighbors Noticed



Ricky Oliveras,
Office of
Adventist
Mission

Salvador, Brazil, is known for its vibrant culture, architectural wonders, and beautiful beaches. With a population of some three million people, it's the fourth largest city in the nation.

Although the Adventist Church has experienced significant growth in Salvador, there are still unentered areas in this city. Global Mission is working to establish new groups of believers in areas where there is no Adventist presence, such as Josenildo's neighborhood.

Josenildo was known as a drunk whose bad habits disrupted his family life and the whole community.

Arivaldo, an Adventist, lived nearby, and he encountered Josenildo on his way to work. He knew Josenildo was looking for a job, so he offered him a position building churches with his construction company.

It didn't take long for the two men to become friends. Arivaldo treated Josenildo with respect, which made Josenildo wonder why he was always

so kind. Over time, Arivaldo asked Josenildo whether he was interested in Bible studies, and the two began reading the Bible together.

"Before I met Jesus, I didn't have happiness," Josenildo says. "But when I came to know Christ, my life was transformed."

Josenildo was baptized, and he changed for the better. His family was so inspired by his transformation that they, too, gave their hearts to Jesus. Even the neighbors noticed the difference. When the usual loud music from his home stopped one day, everyone wondered whether he was OK. When they checked on him, they saw that Josenildo was a changed man. He spoke kindly to them and treated them respectfully, and they wanted to know what had inspired these changes in his life.

Josenildo used this opportunity to minister to his neighbors. Every Friday night, they gathered in his living room to talk about their week. They shared their concerns, requests for prayer, and praises. Josenildo pointed them to the Bible, showing them a Creator who cared deeply about them. For the children, Josenildo's daughter lead an activity in the hallway.

This group has grown close, and as a result, 10 people have already been baptized, and more are studying for baptism!

Small groups like this one are the core of church planting in Salvador. Small groups of new believers develop into congregations, and these congregations divide into more small groups that spread throughout the city.

Five years ago, church leaders in Salvador's state had



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Watch "The Neighbors Noticed" in action at m360.tv/s1921.

an ambitious goal of building 1,000 churches in five years. They reached their goal, and every building represents an ever-growing congregation of believers who, like Josenildo, have been changed by Jesus.

"Jesus is good," says Josenildo. "He transforms lives. And just as He transformed my life, He can transform anyone's life."

No matter the struggles someone may face, Jesus has the power to transform that person's life. And more lives are impacted as churches are planted throughout the world. Thank you for helping us change lives by supporting church planting through Global Mission!



GLOBAL MISSION

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- 1 Since Josenildo met Jesus, he smiles a lot!
- 2 Arivaldo, right, and Josenildo studying the Bible.
- 3 Josenildo and his neighbors meeting in his home on a Friday evening for fellowship and Bible study.
- 4 Josenildo worshipping with his new church family.
- 5 Josenildo praying with his neighbor about his concerns.



God Spoke ON TV



Editor's Note

In 2016, a Thirteenth Sabbath Offering helped Hope Channel New Zealand begin broadcasting free of charge throughout the country. As a result, some 170,000 people are watching each month, and hundreds are visiting Adventist churches. One woman whose life was changed by an encounter with Hope Channel was Adelaide. The following story is adapted from her interview with video producer Leandro Silva, pictured left.



Adelaide's world turned upside down when her partner died in 2011. In 2014, she suffered another blow when she lost her father. She began wondering where God was in her life and had questions about what had become of her partner and father after their deaths.

One day, while Adelaide was flicking through the channels on TV, she stumbled upon Hope Channel. She had never heard of Hope Channel before, and she decided to watch a few minutes to see what it was all about. She was instantly hooked.

"I just thought, *Wow!*" Adelaide said. "I was amazed because questions that I had on my mind were being answered more or less when I switched the channel on. It got to the point where I would tell my daughters, 'Hey, remember that question I just asked about God? Guess what? It's just been answered. You have to come and see!'" Hope Channel soon became the only TV Adelaide and her girls were watching.

After viewing Hope Channel for some time, Adelaide wanted to visit an Adventist church. But the family was a little nervous about walking into a building full of strangers. "I stalked the church for three months while I was having Sabbath at home with Hope Channel!" Adelaide confessed with a giggle. A couple

of times, they drove to the church and then went around the block and drove home again. "The third time we came, we were all dressed up and prepared. We took a deep breath outside the door, and we just said, 'All right, let's do this.' Then we walked through the door, and we came in and sat down. And it just felt like home."

Garry Hallmond is the pastor of the church Adelaide and her daughters began attending. "It's quite interesting to know what she'd learnt through Hope Channel," he said. "[She learnt] not only about the Sabbath but also about what happens when someone dies and that Jesus is coming again."

With this new knowledge, Adelaide no longer worried about the well-being of her partner and father. "What I've learned about death . . . is that those we've lost are asleep," she said. "I really feel at peace with finally knowing the truth."

Before closing the interview, Adelaide shared with Leandro that she had recently been diagnosed with pancreatic cancer. "When I got off the phone with the doctor, I got down on my knees straight away. . . . I told God, 'I'm going to do this with You. We're going to do this journey together.'"



Then she added, "I would love for my children to come to know that God is real and that He loves us all."

A month after her interview, Adelaide passed away. Leandro had an opportunity to talk with her daughters not long afterward. "Our mother showed us the path to follow," they told him, "and we will try to remain on that path so we can meet her again."

Please pray that Adelaide's daughters and the people of New Zealand will come to know the love of Jesus. And please continue to support Hope Channel through your weekly mission offerings. To give, visit adventistmission.org/donate.



HopeChannel

Hope Channel is the global television and media network of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. The mission of Hope Channel is to offer God's good news for a better life today and for eternity through the Seventh-day Adventist Church's wholistic understanding of the Bible, including the three angels' messages and end-time prophecies. Hope Channel produces TV programs and other media and broadcasts globally via satellite, cable systems, and the internet. To learn more, visit hope.tv.org.



To watch Adelaide's story, visit m360.tv/s1937.



CHILDREN'S STORY

Camels, Mangos, and Missionary Kids

Hi everyone! We're the Netteburg kids: Lyol, Zane, Addison, and Juniper. We live in Chad, a country in northern Central Africa. Our mom and dad are missionary doctors, but we're missionaries too because we love sharing Jesus with the people who live here.

Mission 360° magazine asked us what it's like being missionary kids growing up in Chad and



what we like about our experience here. Here are some of our thoughts.

Juniper, 4

1 I like a lot of things about Chad, especially the animals. I think people know that because they're always bringing us new pets like this baby goat. He loves being hugged!

2 One time, someone even gave us a camel. There are lots of camels here because the local people raise them. My older sister, Addison, and I were excited to see this baby camel with its mommy.

3 We live on something called a compound. It's a bunch of houses together with a wall around them. We have lots of mango trees. I absolutely love mangos! During mango season, we rarely eat at home. We simply walk around the compound, picking up mangos and stuffing our faces!

We share a lot of mangos with my parents' patients. While they eat the mangos, I get to try new things like pounding rice with a big stick. It's hard!

4 I like to share Jesus' love. Now that I'm four, I can help Addison give out baby clothes and soft blankets to new mommies like she's doing in this picture. Our mommy likes us to do this for her patients.



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Addison, 6

5 My favorite place to visit with my parents is the Fulani village. The Fulani are a group of people who are mostly shepherds, but some are farmers too. I like to visit mommy's patients with their new babies.

6 When we visit the Fulani group, they walk out to their cows and bring me back fresh milk in a metal bowl. It's my favorite thing! It takes like ice cream!

7 One way I share God is by helping Mommy and Daddy on Sabbath. Every Sabbath, we

hop in the back of the truck and drive out to remote villages to worship God under a big mango tree!

We love teaching kids and their parents Bible stories and songs. I help with felts and sing the songs. It makes me sad to think of all the children who don't get to learn Bible stories and songs about Jesus. We go to villages where there isn't a single Bible!



Zane, 8

- 8 My favorite thing is to swim in our river during the hot season. Lately, we've had to change rivers because hippos started coming to the one we were using. Hippos are very dangerous, so we're not allowed to swim with them! The new swimming river is great. One spot is deep, so we can jump from a tree into the river.
- 9 I love to make stuff. My favorite things to make are bows and arrows. I have to select the perfect tree branches. I also love making things out of old tire rubber. Some of my friends in Chad can make the most amazing things. One kid makes tiny motorcycles and cars out of pieces of trash. They have moving parts and everything!
- 10 In the villages, there are a lot of animals we can play with when Mommy and Daddy go to visit people. There are always pigs, goats, sheep, donkeys, cows, and horses. In this photo, my



brother and sisters and I (back left) are playing with baby chicks.

- 11 I enjoy sharing Jesus by helping with witnessing at the hospital. Last year was the first time we've done a live nativity scene at the hospital. It was hard to make it look different from normal village life because Chadian culture and dress are a lot like Bible times. Many patients from all over the country were able to see "Baby Jesus" and hear the story translated in their own language.





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Check out video stories about missionaries at m360.tv/missionary!

Lyol, 11

12 Chad is a great place to be a missionary. There is so much to do! My parents work in the hospital, which is in our front yard, basically. Here's a picture of the staff with my parents on the far right. They help people feel better and tell them about God's love. My mommy does a lot of surgeries. That's when you cut people open and fix what's broken. My daddy takes care of the really sick patients and keeps the hospital running smoothly. He also homeschools us.

13 I miss having friends who speak English a lot, but two years ago, God sent me a new friend named Carmi. His parents are missionaries from the African country Cameroon. After school, Carmi (right), Zane (left), and I play outside together.

14 This past year another new family from America came to live nearby. They have four kids, and we have so much fun together. Their daddy teaches me guitar lessons.

15 One of my favorite things to do is helping my dad lead out at church in the different villages. We want to thank you for giving your weekly mission offerings in Sabbath School or online. Your offerings help support the missionary work of our family and about 400 other missionary families around the world!

If you'd like to write to us, we'd love to hear from you. Please send your email to Questions@adventistmission.org, and we'll write you back!



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Longtime Missionary Irene Wakeham Lee Dies at 107

Irene Wakeham Lee was born the year the RMS Titanic sunk, was in Hawaii when Pearl Harbor was bombed, and dedicated most of her life to serving others overseas. She passed peacefully to her rest on December 26, 2019, in her home with her stepson, David Lee, and family. She was 107 years old.

A Tribute to a Faithful Teacher

"Few missionaries who have served in the Far Eastern Division [now Southern Asia-Pacific Division] have made a greater contribution or have touched more lives than has Dr. Irene Wakeham. For more than 24 years, she was a teacher, counselor of students and friend to many students and faculty at Mountain View College and Philippine Union College. . . .

"The contribution she has made is more, however, than merely teaching young people how to express themselves in the English language. She did this well. . . . But far greater has been her spiritual influence upon hundreds of Filipino young people. As they sat in her classes and saw a teacher who reflected the Master Teacher, their lives were changed. They loved her. They enjoyed being with her. They would come to her home or go on trips with her, for it was fun and comfortable to be with Dr. Wakeham" (B. E. Olson, "A Tribute to a Faithful Teacher," Far Eastern Division Outlook, March 1971, p. 14).

Irene Wakeham Lee at 105 years old, going for her daily walk at her country home in Tennessee.



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There's nothing unusual about the Adventist Church being involved in mission. Mission has always been our focus. But there is something very unusual about a new mission movement taking off in Tokyo.

The church in Japan has a burden for the millions of unreached people living in their capital city. So they invited the General Conference and the Northern Asia-Pacific Division to partner with them to create Mission Unusual—an ambitious church-planting and disciple-making movement.

Key to the development of Mission Unusual are the Global Mission Centers, which focus on creating resources to share the gospel with unreached people groups.

“Tokyo is the world’s largest city,” says Doug Venn, director of the Global Mission Urban Center. “The challenge is great

before us. But guess what, our God is greater! He has given us this mandate in Revelation 14:6 and other places in Scripture to go to every nation, kindred, tongue, and people.

“So, how are we doing? Well, we’re not home yet, and that’s where we as an Adventist family worldwide can focus on reaching the unreached people groups of this city.”

A team of church planting missionaries will soon arrive in Tokyo to learn the language and how best to share Jesus with the Japanese. In time, they’ll start new groups of believers who will, in turn, disciple others. Eventually, they’ll be supported by the ministry of Global Mission pioneers, Urban Centers of Influence, volunteers, and tentmakers in a concerted effort to reach the entire city for Jesus!

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.

Helping to lead this team is Pastor Nozomu Obara, the president of the East Japan Conference. For years, he’s had a passion for church planting, and he and his wife, Sachiko, are actively engaged in a disciple-making ministry for children. Pastor Obara will be transitioning from his position as president to become the associate director for Mission Unusual Tokyo.

“Greater Tokyo Area is a big area with over 40 million people,” Pastor Obara said. “But in the heart of Tokyo City, there are about 10 million people—and only 10 Adventist churches with about 900 worship attendees every week. So, one Adventist needs to reach more than 10,000 people. Tokyo is a big challenge!”

To confront the challenge, Japanese pastors and missionaries will use a holistic approach to mission. Mission Unusual will plant the seeds of mission over the next five years. But the mission won’t stop there—these efforts will continue to grow and impact people’s lives for years to come.

“Our focus is not just on events and programs,” Pastor Obara added. “Building relationships and getting involved with people is our focus. Finding out people’s needs and meeting people’s needs. In other words, implementing Christ’s method here in Mission Unusual Tokyo.”

We’ll keep you updated as God leads this movement and uses it for His glory. In the meantime, you, too, can support Mission Unusual Tokyo. Please pray for this program as it continues to unfold over the next five years to uplift Jesus in this city.

Mission Unusual TOKYO



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Grow Community

1



Carmichelle Flores-Reyes is a pediatrician at Adventist Medical Center Manila in the Philippines.

As a young medical student, I had dreams of sharing the gospel with my fellow students. I would introduce myself to my classmates, and then we'd share where we were from and where we had attended university. Somehow, I would always find a way to insert my religion into the conversation. They would look at me weirdly as if I were an alien. I didn't even notice and just kept on sharing my beliefs and passages from the Bible to prove what I believed was right. I then invited them to attend church with me. I expected them to be interested, convinced, and converted. But instead, it was the opposite. They were repelled by my direct approach and quickly looked for someone else to talk to.

My boyfriend (now husband) was a pastor. I asked him, "How do I reach these wealthy, educated, busy young professionals, who have everything they need in life, and who don't seem to see a need for God? Why are the usual ministry strategies not working on them?" My boyfriend didn't know either, but we prayed together and asked God for answers.

Eventually, I did make friends in medical school, and we'd hang out together in cafes or restaurants. We just talked about life, and through the

relationships we built, they opened up about their deepest burdens and even voluntarily asked for advice and prayers. This was God's answer to our prayers. These people didn't want to be pressured to believe the way I did. But instead, they longed for genuine relationships, to fill an emptiness that couldn't be satisfied by anything except God.

The growing relationships with my classmates led to an idea. We invited young adults to hang out with us after work in a common place with a relaxed atmosphere. Then we talked about life and shared personal stories, thoughts, and ideas in a friendly and open manner. Through these nightly groups, we met many young adults with different life experiences and faith backgrounds who were searching for someone to talk to. The relationships grew. Eventually, we went from meeting just one night a week to eating meals together, playing sports, and being there for them through their personal trials. They observed our Christian lifestyle and asked what they could do to have joy and contentment like we had. We never forced our beliefs, but God was slowly paving the way for them to get to know Him. They began to ask about our faith, leading us to start small groups where we could deepen our relationships with God and

build community. It was so encouraging to finally have a strategy that worked to reach out to the unreached.

But God showed us that more could be done! We started Urban Centers of Influence to create more opportunities to interact with and reach different people groups. The first center was an office space that was used by many young adults to do their work as entrepreneurs and to run start-up businesses. Simply Foods was another center, where we provided healthy vegetarian food delivery options to busy young adults who didn't have time to cook for themselves. We also had a program called 8 Weeks to Wellness. This step-by-step plan, offered to individuals or groups, teaches how to incorporate a healthy diet and lifestyle into their busy schedules.

Connecting with friends in medical school and opening Urban Centers of Influence grew into a huge network—a community. And by God's grace and guidance, we launched our first church plant in July 2015, starting in a small hall with less than 20 people. We quickly outgrew this and moved into a bigger space with more than 50 regular attendees, more than half of whom were non-Adventists. Then in 2018, our group, Grow Community, was officially recognized as a church, the first worship community in the Philippines where the elders and leaders were all young adults! So many people wanted to be part of the community, making us realize that there are many more people groups that are unreached, especially in Manila. In one year, we multiplied into three church plants in different parts of Manila. Currently, there are seven church plants scattered in key locations in Metro Manila.

There are still so many unreached people groups around us that need to know Jesus. All God needs is our desire to make more disciples for Him. Yes, it might take years of experimenting and even mistakes. Still, with God on your side, there is always the assurance that community and fellowship will grow and that the gospel will reach the unreached.

- 1 Simply Foods offers healthy vegetarian food to busy professionals.
- 2 Building friendships in an informal, comfortable café setting.
- 3 The Grow Community Church is full of vibrant, young adults who share Jesus with the unreached.



Urban Centers of Influence

Adventist Mission supports wholistic mission to the cities. This includes a rapidly growing number of Urban Centers of Influence (UCIs), which 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 UCIs, visit MissionToTheCities.org.



To watch video stories about UCIs, visit m360.tv/s2019.



KYRGYZSTAN



Originally from Argentina, **Audrey and Pablo Romero** serve as volunteer missionaries in Kyrgyzstan, where they teach English as a second language. They have two children, Emma, five, and Mickael, two.

Mom, can we invite my two friends to Sabbath worship Friday night?" asked Emma, my five-year-old daughter. She was talking about two little neighbor girls we had met a week ago.

"No, Emma, we can't," I replied. "They don't understand anything about the Sabbath."

"But we can invite them so they will understand," she urged. "You can teach their parents, and I'll read my friends a Bible story."

I tried to explain that sharing our faith in Kyrgyzstan was much more complicated than it had been in Bolivia, where we had previously volunteered as missionaries. Most people there already knew about the Bible, but it wasn't like that here. Our approach would have to be different.

Emma studied my face, trying to understand why her simple question was receiving a negative answer. I felt awful as I watched her joyful

enthusiasm melt into disappointment.

That night, I prayerfully considered Emma's request. I realized that I had forgotten how many times our children had made it possible for us to connect with someone we may not have been able to otherwise.

Like the day we arrived in Kyrgyzstan and went shopping for SIM cards for our phones. The kids were restless, and I was trying my best to keep them from making a lot of noise or breaking things in the store. Another mom, noticing my desperation, smiled at me as if saying, "I know exactly what you're feeling!" She had a daughter about the same age as our son, Mickael, and the two babies started playing together.

The woman, who spoke English, asked Pablo and me what we were doing in Kyrgyzstan. We realized that if we hadn't had our baby boy with us, we probably wouldn't have been able to speak with her.



A Little Child Shall Lead Them



2

We had enrolled Emma in a Christian kindergarten because she wanted to make some friends, and we thought it was a good idea for her to start learning Russian. As a result, we made friends with her teacher, Sveta, and at her request, began teaching her English every Tuesday evening.

Recently, while we were taking a walk, a neighbor woman stopped to talk to our children. She spoke little English, and we spoke little Russian at the time, so she used Google Translate to invite us to her home for refreshments. We went and completely fell in love with her family. We had such a wonderful time, we decided to invite them to our house the next week. Since then, we've had dinner together every Monday night. We've talked about the love of God, and she's asked to study the Bible with us!

A few nights ago, during family worship, Emma again asked, "Mom, can you invite my friends here so you can teach the Bible to their parents while we play in my room?" She hadn't forgotten the conversation we'd had a few days ago. "We need to be friends with them first like Jesus did, but how can we be friends if they never come to our house?"

My husband and I looked at each other. Our little Emma, only five years old, clearly understood this precious truth. And I too now understood something clearly. God was using our children to share His love. I had underestimated their ability to serve their Savior, but they were the real volunteers in our family!



3



4

- 1 Our daughter, Emma, collecting stones.
- 2 Emma and Mickael with their new friend Ina, left.
- 3 Enjoying our first snowstorm in Kyrgyzstan.
- 4 Me and Pablo at mission camp before beginning our ministry.



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

Making the Most of Your Everyday Life

Mansukh Prajapati created a fridge made of clay that doesn't use electricity. His clay fridge has dramatically changed the lives of many in India who live in hot, humid weather without modern conveniences.

In Kenya, entrepreneurs on bicycles are available to recharge your cell phone battery by pedaling life back into them.

Engineering students in Peru have figured out a way to create water in an area that receives only an inch of rainfall each year. It's a giant advertising billboard that absorbs humid air and converts it into purified water. One billboard generates more than 90 liters every day.

Presenting the concept of frugal innovation, Ravi Radjou uses the preceding examples to explain the Hindi word *jugaad*.¹ *Jugaad* is an improvised fix or a clever solution that, in many cases, grows out of adversity or extreme need. *Jugaad* happens when people cannot afford or do not have access to the usual go-to solution. They're forced to tap into human ingenuity to find a different yet effective solution.

Whether trying to lose a few pounds or make ends meet, at one time or another, we have all wished for a *jugaad*. The disciples of Jesus were no different when faced with the impossible task of feeding 5,000 people and their families without access to groceries. Then Jesus came onto the scene and used an inconsequential boy's small lunch as a *jugaad*.

Jesus identified *jugaad* in ordinary people and in overlooked resources. For more than three years, Jesus demonstrated just how much can be done with limited resources and much faith. Then He said, "Go and make disciples of all nations" (Matthew 28:19, NIV). And we often respond, "How? What with? And what if . . . ?"

Spreading the message of Jesus' love and saving grace is a daunting task from most every perspective—logistics, finances, personnel, time. Yet it is not impossible.

What is the *jugaad* that the church needs to fulfill the gospel commission? What is the resource that is often overlooked and underutilized? It is us—the believers. The Adventist Church is more than 22 million in number but not necessarily in witnessing strength.

"Long has God waited for the spirit of service to take possession of the whole church so that everyone shall be working for Him according to his ability. When the members of the church of God do their appointed work in the needy fields at home and abroad, in fulfillment of the gospel commission, the whole world will soon be warned and the Lord Jesus will return to this earth with power and great glory."²

Our go-to solution is to wait. We wait for a local evangelistic meeting before we connect with a neighbor. We wait for the General Conference to roll out a new initiative to reach the world before we trade vacation for a mission trip. We wait for free time on our calendar before we squeeze witnessing into our schedule. But the time to act is now; the resources are us—"Wait not for others to urge you to action. . . . Go forward without delay. . . . Act as if you heard Christ calling upon you personally to do your utmost in His service. Look not to see who else is ready. If you are truly consecrated, God will, through your instrumentality, bring into the truth others whom He can use as channels to convey light to many that are groping in darkness."³

The opportunities to witness are in the seemingly insignificant moments of everyday life. "Take your everyday, ordinary life—your sleeping, eating, going-to-work, and walking-around life—and place it before God as an offering" (Romans 12:1, *The Message*). When we truly live our faith—in every moment, through every opportunity—the message of God's love will spread exponentially. What a picture of total member involvement that would be!

It is time to go beyond practices and precedence. It is time to get out of our restrictive box of doing things the way they've always been done. We must respond to the gospel commission with boldness, innovative ideas, and unprecedented enthusiasm.

Jesus gave us more than salvation on the cross; He patterned a revolutionary way of living. He showed us how to take worship out of the sanctuary and into our hearts. He demonstrated how to walk out of church and live Christianity. His life shows how we can express faith through more than words. He gave us the pattern for centering our lifestyle on serving others and sharing our



Fylvia Fowler Kline is the manager of VividFaith, a service that is aligned with her passion—finding creative ways to share the Christian faith. This has been especially important to her since she and her family served six years as missionaries in Nepal at a time when only 0.1 percent of the population was Christian, and witnessing was illegal.



faith. Jesus shows us how and then calls us to be the *jugaad* to the gospel commission.

VividFaith helps you find ways to enrich your Christian lifestyle through service. On this website, you will find all kinds of opportunities to serve—short- and long-term volunteer positions; part- and full-time jobs; group mission trips; local church and community events; and even ways to help remotely.

Whether you are looking for something meaningful to do on a Sunday with your family or searching for a new job that is mission-focused, try **vividfaith.com**. Use it to find ways to share your faith while meeting a need.

- 1 Navi Radjou, "Creative Problem-Solving in the Face of Extreme Limits," TED Talk, January 12, 2015, video, 16:29, <https://youtu.be/CHRZ6OrSvvI>; Navi Radjou, Jaideep Prabhu, and Simone Ahuja, *Jugaad Innovation: A Frugal and Flexible Approach to Innovation in the 21st Century* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2012).
- 2 Ellen G. White, *Acts of the Apostles* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press®, 1911), 111.
- 3 Ellen G. White, *Counsels on Health* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press®, 1923), 425.



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Give Me Iceland!



Jonathan Walter is a pastor serving with the General Conference Ministerial Association. He served as the vice president of missions for GYC from 2017 to 2019.

What if we went to a country and claimed the entire place for Jesus?” This was the question we asked ourselves as a GYC leadership team. “Jesus gave us the mandate to go reach the whole world. No mission endeavor is too big for Him. So, why not attempt it?”

We agreed to organize some sort of mission project. But first, we had to determine our destination. We knew we wanted a country that presented a huge challenge to mission—somewhere that was highly secular and that had little Adventist presence and no significant church growth. Before long, we’d settled on Iceland, an island nation between the United States and Europe.

We spent months praying and talking about what this project should look like. This preparation included conversations with Gavin Anthony, the Iceland Conference president. He helped us understand that the most urgent need of Iceland’s postmodern society was an awareness that a God who answers prayer exists. Doctrinal presentations and evangelistic meetings have a role to play, but they’re not always the best starting point in today’s European context. With this in mind, we decided to make intercessory prayer our focus.

As we talked, our vision began to take shape. We would prayer walk Iceland’s capital city,

Reykjavik, where more than half of the country’s population lives. Prayer walking means walking the streets in a prayerful mindset, asking God to guide your thoughts and make you aware of people and institutions that might need prayer. It involves knocking on doors and asking people whether you can pray with them about their needs and concerns. It also includes interceding for the city itself, claiming it for God and asking Him to work in it in a powerful way.

Fifty of us arrived in Iceland to begin our ministry in August 2019. Every morning and evening we spent time together in prayer, asking God to revive, forgive, and unify us through the outpouring of His Holy Spirit. During the day, we spent the majority of our time knocking on doors and praying with people. We prayed for every home, business, and institution that we saw, leaving the outcome and any success with God.

Having grown up in Europe, I was quite nervous about how the Icelandic people were going to react to the offer of prayer. But to my astonishment, many accepted. Our group experienced hundreds of incredible divine appointments. I personally had a few powerful encounters as well. One woman told me, “God must have sent you to me.” Many were clearly touched by the Holy Spirit, and some were moved to tears by their prayer experience. I learned that many had never prayed before. I will always remember what Daniel, a 13-year old boy, asked me after I had offered to pray for the depression he was battling: “What is prayer?”

Formerly Christian countries, such as Iceland, are full of people who are completely oblivious to the idea that there is a God and that you can communicate with Him. There is an entire generation that doesn’t have even a basic understanding of who Jesus is and what He’s done. And it’s not because they’re rage-filled atheists, as is often presumed. It’s because God isn’t a part of life in any way in these secular societies. Yet, many of these people’s hearts are open to the gospel.

As we ended our prayer mission, we had innumerable reasons to praise God. We had been able to pray with leaders of the country. We were blessed to share 150,000 GLOW tracts that pointed people to a website where they could request prayer and Bible studies and connect with a local church. This website has had thousands of visits. Some people have started attending our church and even enrolled their children in the local church school.



1



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Intercessory prayer works! Combined with total surrender of our plans to God, prayer becomes the most potent weapon against Satan and the most essential tool in mission. Prayer is not just an obligatory ritual for evangelism. Prayer *is* evangelism!

Will you claim your country for Jesus?

Will you start praying for your city, beginning with your neighborhood?

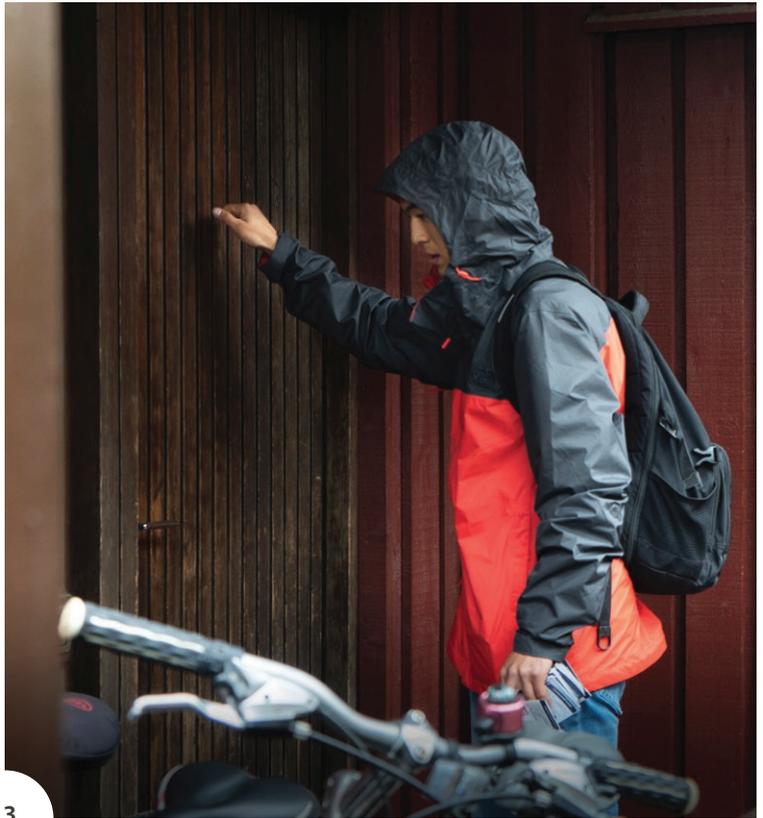
Will you set aside your plans and join God's Spirit in His work around you?

To watch a short documentary on this mission, please visit: <https://tinyurl.com/PrayForIceland>.

1 GYC stands for Generation. Youth. Christ. It's a youth-led supportive ministry that seeks to inspire and challenge young people to take sacrificial initiative for Christ. Find out more at gycweb.org.

MISSION to the CITIES

The Mission to the Cities initiative seeks to focus Seventh-day Adventist Church leaders and members on the urgency of reaching the large cities of the world using Christ's method, as described in *The Ministry of Healing*: "Christ's method alone will give true success in reaching the people. The Savior mingled with people as one who desired their good. He showed sympathy for them, ministered to their needs, and won their confidence. Then He invited them, 'Follow Me'" (p. 143). Mission to the Cities is an integral part of the "Reach the World: I Will Go" strategic plan voted by the General Conference of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. To learn how you can be a part, visit iwillgo2020.org.



3



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- 1 Fifty missionaries from six continents spent 10 days in Iceland, one of the most secular countries in the world. Their goal: to reach the entire nation through the power of prayer.
- 2 We shared 150,000 GLOW tracts that pointed people to a website where they could request prayer and Bible studies and connect with a local church.
- 3 Going door to door to pray with people in their homes in Iceland's capital city, Reykjavik.
- 4 Our mission group spent much time each day united in prayer.

Where Mission and Filmmaking Collide

Caleb Haakenson, a recent graduate of Union College in Nebraska, United States, won first place in the 2018 Adventist Mission student film contest, *My Story, My Mission*. His prize was to join Adventist Mission on a trip to develop his skills as a filmmaker and to learn more about mission work around the world. Watch Caleb's winning film at AdventistMission.org/filmcontest.

Hi, I'm Caleb Haakenson! For a week and a half in September 2019, I traveled with Ricky Oliveras, a video producer from Adventist Mission. Filming and photographing mission stories in Albania and Cyprus, I discovered firsthand how truly active God still is in the world around us.

Pictured here is the first Adventist church in Albania, which was built in 1994. Religion has been polarizing in this country. In 1976, Albania became the first atheist state in the world. Most Albanians are very nominal toward any religion. They have lived for so long without a focus on religion that outreach and evangelism are very difficult tasks. Many of the Adventist churches in Albania have started outreach programs in their communities to show Jesus' love in a way that a typically nonreligious community can relate to. Slowly, things have improved, and this small Adventist congregation has been growing in exciting ways!

The Need

There are only 456 Adventists out of nearly three million people living in this 10/40 Window country. The 10/40 Window is a region of the world that represents one of the church's toughest mission challenges. Stretching from northern Africa into the Middle East and Asia, it is home to two-thirds of the world's population, most of the world's least-reached countries and people groups, and the fewest Christians. It's a high priority for Global Mission church planting.

Please pray for the ministry of our Global Mission Urban Centers of Influence and support them at Global-Mission.org/giving.





This is a picture of Pastor Delmar, his wife, Nati, and their daughter, Clara. A missionary family from Brazil, they were called to lead the congregation in Korca, Albania. They taught me many things about how to persevere through difficult times in ministry and how to give a true representation of Jesus' love to a religiously disinterested community. They're not afraid to live outside their comfort zone, and they're confident that God has put them in this position to do incredible things.



Delmar and Nati run an Urban Center of Influence, where they have music and language lessons and a health club. They're also engaged in other outreach ministries, such as Pathfinders and Sunday morning volleyball games. They're getting creative to effectively minister to a community without much real spiritual interest.

While in the capital city, Tirana, we visited a small school set up by the Adventist Development and Relief Agency in Albania. There we interviewed a volunteer teacher from Southwestern Adventist University named Leilani. While visiting with Leilani, I learned how to film a complete story, including all aspects of her life as a missionary, in one day. We had to work with her schedule, find a quiet place for an interview amid her energetic students, and get enough footage in a small amount of time to tell her story in a captivating way. While visiting Leilani's classroom, I snapped this photo of one of her students.

Meeting Delmar, Nati, and Leilani gave me a glimpse of the passion and dedication of our missionaries serving around the world. Their lives abroad are not as simple or easy as they would have been if they had remained in their home countries. But they go because of the impact they can have. Especially in a country full of people who don't understand their need for God, their sacrifices are a gift. Paul writes in Romans, "How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them? And how can anyone preach unless they are sent? As it is written: 'How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!'" (Romans 10:14, 15, NIV). Delmar's family and Leilani are all examples of those who live out the gospel so that others have a chance to hear about the Jesus they need.





ISRAEL



Duane McKey is the president of Adventist World Radio.

“No Man Did This!”

Wisam was born into a powerful family in Nazareth. As a young man, he was taught to hate Christians and their pork-eating and alcohol-drinking ways. So when he learned that his sister had become a Christian while pursuing her studies in Europe, he was irate and immediately told his family.

The family called a tribal council, and an uncle told Wisam, "You must go to Europe and kill her!"

Soon Wisam was on his way to kill his sister. Hoping to change her mind, he called her and said, "I have been sent by the family to kill you."

Much to his surprise, she remained calm and asked Wisam to give her a year. He agreed to wait, and she then suggested that he stay at the Bogenhofen Christian school in Austria and study German.

Wisam liked this idea. He was sure that doors were opening for him to convert Christians to his religion! But as time passed, the opposite happened. There grew in him a desire to know the Jesus who raised the dead and forgave sins. By the time the year ended, Wisam had accepted Jesus and was baptized. Instead of killing his sister, he attended her wedding to an Adventist pastor!

"Stone Him!"

When Wisam returned to Nazareth, he was received with suspicion. His uncle was angry when he learned that Wisam had not killed his sister. And when Wisam boldly asked the council whether they knew Jesus, his uncle shouted, "Stone him!"

The men picked up rocks and hurled them at Wisam until he fell to the ground, unconscious. His father, moved to compassion, ordered one of Wisam's brothers to rescue him and take him to the hospital, where he eventually recovered from his injuries. But when he returned home, the hostility continued, and a few days later, he was stoned again! This time, his parents suggested he leave Israel.

Wisam decided to study theology at Bogenhofen and Southern Adventist University. During that time, he married Adri, an Adventist woman from South Africa, and together they pastored several churches throughout Europe.

Then an amazing thing happened: Wisam was asked to pastor in the Israel Field—right in his hometown of Nazareth!

Stabbed!

Last year, Adventist World Radio (AWR) delivered a supply of Godpods for Wisam to share with his community. These Godpods contain the whole Bible in Arabic and Farsi, plus Bible studies and children's stories.

The AWR ministry team learned that, in the previous year, two of Wisam's cousins—angry at his Christian influence in the community—had rallied a mob that went to his house to attack him.

One of his cousins carried a large butcher knife, and when Wisam came out of the house, they rushed him, screaming insults.

These cousins were the same ones who, years before, had actively participated in his stoning. Their father was now dead, but the sons continued his legacy of hatred.

As Adri prayed, Wisam faced his aggressors. Unwilling to fight, Wisam turned to go. At that moment, one of his cousins charged, stabbing him with enough force to plunge the sharp blade deep into his back.

Well, at least, that was their plan, but what really happened is a different story: the blade of the thick knife bent at a 90-degree angle!

The cousin holding the knife dropped it in confusion. Wisam's brother picked up the now-useless blade and shook it in the air, saying, "Now try to kill the man of God!"

The crowd quickly dispersed, but as they were leaving, one of the cousins turned and shouted, "Wisam, you will not know how or when or where, but I will kill you!"

Wisam's family vowed revenge on the cousins, but he said, "No, we will not attack them. God will fight for us."

Months later, the two cousins who had threatened Wisam were riding their motorcycle, and as they came around a corner, they hit a truck head-on. One cousin was killed instantly, and the other died a week later from his injuries.

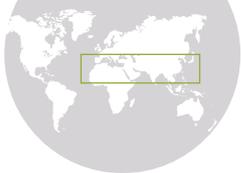
This outcome made a huge impact in the local religious community. Wisam's family is prominent in the city, and it was a well-known fact that his uncle's family had vowed to kill him for being a Christian. People were amazed by his refusal to fight back, his trust in Jesus, and his deliverance.

Wisam has now opened an Urban Center of Influence in the heart of Nazareth, where he teaches English straight from the Bible—and there is a waiting list to attend his classes! Learn more about his remarkable story at awr.org/wisam.



Adventist World Radio is the international radio ministry of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. AWR's mission is to bring the gospel to the hardest-to-reach people of the world in their own languages. To watch AWR mission stories, follow the ministry on social media or visit awr.org/videos.

Thank you for supporting AWR through your World Budget and mission offerings!



Food Can Preach!

EDITOR'S

NOTE: This author served as a volunteer Spanish teacher in a country in the 10/40 Window. For the security of the project, her name has been withheld.

What could be better than sharing Jesus in a country full of stunning landscapes, rich culture, and very welcoming and caring people? Doing it in a country where the people share my love for delicious food!

From a simple homemade couscous to a complex stew, I've found that food is one of the best ways to connect with people. I'm often invited by my female students who share my passion for cooking to exchange traditional recipes from our countries. It's an activity I really enjoy, but I never expected God to use it to teach me a valuable lesson.

Aisha* was one of my neighbors and had been studying with me for about six months. She and her eldest daughter and I had formed a close bond. They made me feel like part of their family. They included me in their celebrations and brought me food when I didn't have time to prepare my own or just because they thought I needed to try a recipe.

One day Aisha offered to teach me how to prepare an easy, homemade lemon pie. I watched as she carefully prepared, baked, and decorated the dessert. The result was a masterpiece!

Aisha cut the pie and wrapped half of it for me to enjoy later. Since I was only a block from where I teach, I took it with me when I left to prepare for my next class.

A few minutes later, I heard the sound of quickly approaching footsteps, followed by an abrupt knocking on the door. I opened it to discover Aisha

and her daughter standing there, greatly distressed. Aisha had tears streaming down her face.

"What's the matter, Aisha?" I asked, afraid something dreadful had happened.

"Please, bring the pie that I gave you and destroy it in front of my eyes!" she implored. I couldn't understand what was happening, so I retrieved the pie and gave it to her. Immediately she began apologizing. She explained that she wanted to throw it away because she had tried a piece at home and thought it was much too acidic. She and her daughter had come as soon as they could to warn me because they were mortified by the thought that it could make me feel sick.

I told Aisha that everything was OK and that there was nothing to worry about. But I couldn't console her. As she turned to go home, she was still crying.

During my class, I couldn't stop thinking about how Aisha had gotten so upset about something that seemed so harmless. I was worried about her, so when my class was over, I went to visit her. She continued to apologize as if she had done something terrible to me. "Why are you so upset about this, Aisha?" I asked.

Her answer touched my heart deeply. She said, "My beautiful girl, God has given the responsibility to all of us to look after people who surround us the best way we can. While you're here, away from home, it's my responsibility not only to be nice to you but also to give you a place where you feel safe and loved because you're God's child."

Aisha's response left me speechless. How seriously she had taken her responsibility to take the very best care of me that she possibly could! It was a beautiful and profound reminder of the huge responsibility I have to share Jesus through small, disinterested acts of love and service every day. God used that pie to preach me a sermon I'll never forget!

*Name has been changed.



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JULY

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