

mission



The official mission magazine of the Seventh-day Adventist® Church VOLUME 7 • NUMBER 2



8 The Cyber Church

11 Of All the Things She Could Have Said

12 I Ate Like a God

22 The Setup

28 Trust the Knife

EDITORIAL

After Galo Izquierdo and his team of church planters walked into a jail in Ecuador six years ago, hundreds of its inmates would never be the same.

The team's work is intense. The 5,600 prisoners live in 23 separate cell blocks. In order to give all of them an opportunity to hear the gospel, each church planter preaches five or six sermons every Sabbath. But the results of their labor are amazing!

"So far, we've baptized more than 900 people," Galo said, with a beaming smile. "The jail is like a mine, a people mine, because the prisoners are so hungry to hear about Jesus."

Your support of Global Mission enables a pioneer named Juan to work with the church

planting team and makes Bibles and Adventist literature available to the prisoners. "We brought 50 Bibles to the jail last Sabbath," Galo said, "but as soon as we delivered them, we received requests for many more!"

Some of the converted prisoners have joined the church planting team in ministry. One of them is Mr. Guerrero, an ex-hitman who had killed 87 people. He was so depressed, he was planning to commit suicide. But when he accepted Jesus, Mr. Guerrero found abundant life. Now he helps his fellow inmates discover life in Jesus, too.

An ex-convict named Marina, who also accepted Christ in prison, wrote Galo's team a letter. "I'm involved in a prison

ministry in Brazil now, and I'm so happy. I lived 60 years in the world without God. The year I spent in jail getting to know Christ was the best year of my life. I am so grateful you shared Him with me!"

Thank you for supporting church planters like Galo and his team all around the world. Please continue to pray for them and for the thousands of people they're reaching out to with the love of Jesus.



Laurie Falvo,
Mission 360° editor

To read the story of Ruth, an ex-convict who found Jesus through the ministry of Galo's team, see page 22.

Galo Izquierdo, center, with some of his church planters. The Global Mission pioneer, Juan, is on his right.



C O N T E N T S

- 4 A Single Step
- 6 The Woman Behind the Wall
- 8 The Cyber Church
- 11 Of All the Things She Could Have Said
- 12 I Ate Like a God
- 14 Hope for Ex-Offenders
- 16 26 Miles
- 18 Referral for Healing
- 20 Forgotten Trailblazers
- 22 The Setup
- 24 “I Want to Know More”
- 26 More Than I Had Before
- 28 Trust the Knife
- 30 My Story, My Mission

ABOUT OUR COVER PHOTO . . .

Photo by Laurie Falvo

Galo Izquierdo leads a church planting team in ministry at a large jail in Ecuador. So far, they've baptized more than 900 people!

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PERU

A Single Step



From California, United States, **Shannon Grewal** is earning a biomedical science degree at La Sierra University in California.

A what? A staircase? You can't be serious! I thought with a sinking heart. I'd come 4,000 miles to Peru to do something meaningful to improve people's lives. How could building a staircase mean anything?

It was the end of my senior year of high school, and my brother had asked whether I'd like to tag along with him on a mission trip. It seemed like a perfect opportunity to help people, so I agreed. A few weeks later, we found ourselves in San Juan de Miraflores which

- 1 My view from the hilltop in San Juan de Miraflores, Peru, where I would help build a staircase during my mission trip.
- 2 The new staircase spanned the entire length of the hill.

is part of the metropolitan area of Lima, Peru.

After settling into our hostel and meeting some of the members of our group, we headed to the lobby where we were divided into teams and assigned projects. I waited with eager anticipation, wondering how I'd be able to contribute to a Miraflores community on this trip. Maybe I'd get to shadow a doctor for the week or assist a dentist or teach children critical hygiene skills. Finally, the leader, Andrew, reached our group. "Your team," he announced with enthusiasm, "is going to build a staircase!"

I was beyond disappointed, but the next morning, I was standing at the foot of a large, steep hill with my team, ready to start our project. The hill, like the rest of the barren landscape, was covered in small, crowded homes, their tin roofs glinting

the blinding light of the sun. I wondered how the inhabitants managed to navigate the precipitous terrain. I was surprised to learn that they climbed up and down it multiple times a day, carrying bags of groceries, tanks of water, and children!

While waiting for instructions, I stumbled upon what looked like the remains of an old set of stairs. They were covered in loose gravel and barely deep enough to accommodate a person's foot. *Do the people actually use this?* I wondered, deciding to give it a try. I'd only taken two steps when I lost my balance, landing on one knee. Fortunately, I was able to scramble back up before anyone noticed.

Soon our leader motioned for us to climb to the top of the hill to begin working on the staircase. I tried to dig my feet into the dirt to gain a foothold, but





within moments I tumbled down to the bottom. Feeling a little embarrassed, I was relieved that most of my teammates were also struggling. The community members seemed to find our clumsy attempts amusing, but they kindly came to our aid, holding our hands and pulling us along. Finally, we reached our destination.

I'd been pouring cement about an hour when the absurdity of what I was doing hit me again. *I could have built a staircase somewhere back home if I'd wanted to*, I thought, wiping beads of sweat from my face. *Why did I come all this way to build one?* Feeling the need to get away for a few minutes, I decided to go get a drink.

As I began to chug down some water, I felt a tap on my sunburnt shoulder. I was surprised to see one of the local women who had been helping us carry bricks. There was an awkward moment of silence until she began to speak. "You see this hill here?" she asked me in Spanish. "I tried climbing up it and fell, and that is how my

child died. I had to give birth to a dead child."

At first, I was so shocked that I could only focus on her moving mouth, her words washing over me. But as she continued to share her story, a small part of her emotions became mine. If she'd only had proper stairs with a railing, like we were building now, perhaps the pain in her eyes wouldn't be there. I looked at her misty-eyed, completely at a loss for words. At that moment, all I could do was give her a hug.

Her story changed my outlook. No longer was building a staircase a meaningless task. The hill would no longer pose a threat to life. Young and old would now be able to travel to see loved ones with greater ease. Arduous tasks like carrying water and supplies loaded on heads and shoulders would now be a little easier.

At the end of the week, the village threw a party to celebrate the completion of the new staircase. I don't know who was happier that day, them or us!

Now, when life gets rough for me and I'm enticed to give up, the image of this woman comes to mind; the memory of her grasping my arm, the sacred moment of her sharing her story. She helped me learn one of the greatest lessons of my life: sometimes the biggest difference can begin with a single step.

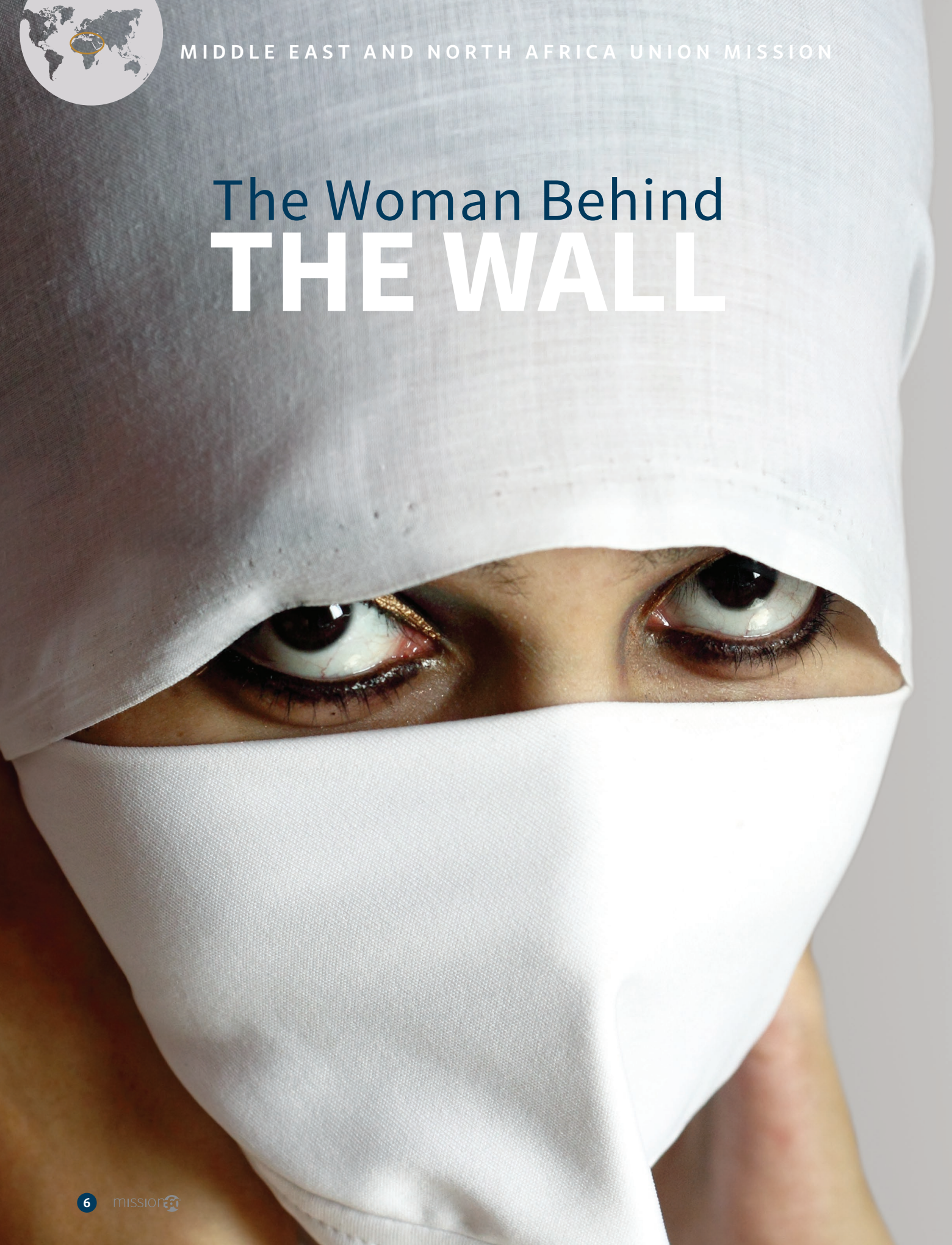


Would you like to help make a positive impact in the lives of others? If so, please consider being a volunteer missionary through Adventist Volunteer Service which facilitates church members' volunteer missionary service around the world. Volunteers ages 18 to 80 may serve as pastors, teachers, medical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



MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH AFRICA UNION MISSION

The Woman Behind **THE WALL**





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

Rosanna* is a nurse with a passion for sharing Jesus with those who need Him most. She and her husband, Gunther, a doctor, help operate a mobile health clinic in a large city in the Middle East, where they minister to the needs of thousands of refugees who can't afford medical care.

One day, the couple received a call from a man who asked them to come see his wife right away.

Rosanna and Gunther made their way to the couple's apartment and listened in stunned silence as the anxious man shared his story.

Seven years ago, his wife, Nasima, was diagnosed with multiple sclerosis, a recurrent inflammatory and progressive disorder of the central nervous system, which had caused visible damage to the entire left side of her body.

The family was not only dealing with her physical illness but also facing the heavy economic costs associated with medical treatment, as well as the psychological trauma of having to flee from their homeland during this difficult period.

About this time, Nasima slowly entered the room. Covered in a white veil, the only thing they could see was a small, puckered face filled with pain.

"It took a lot of convincing on our part to persuade Nasima to allow us to conduct a simple examination," Rosanna said, "because in this part of the world, it's embarrassing to expose oneself, especially to a foreigner."

Rosanna and Gunther decided to admit Nasima into their care. Her medical costs would be covered by the project while she received the physical and psychological treatment she desperately needed to recover.

The next week, Rosanna began therapy sessions. She remembers the first time Nasima removed

the veil that covered her head, spilling out her blond, disheveled hair. Closing the door, Rosanna asked her to lie down with her head toward the lower end of the bed.

"My first goal was to stretch and rebalance Nasima's skeletal muscles to help reduce the inflammation," Rosanna recalled. "I started with her head and neck, but it hurt her so much, she immediately urged me to stop."

Rosanna didn't know what to do because without these treatments, there could be no progress. She decided to pray for wisdom.

"God, I don't know what else to try," she pled. "Please use my hands to glorify your name. Please guide them to bring your healing!"

During the next couple of weeks, the idea slowly came to Rosanna that if she couldn't alleviate Nasima's pain, she could at least try to make her feel beautiful.

On one visit, Rosanna carefully began to comb Nasima's hair. Fortunately, Nasima could tolerate the pain the combing caused. It was difficult to unravel the tangles, but Rosanna's gentle work relaxed Nasima's tense body, and by the end of the combing session, she had fallen into a deep and peaceful sleep.

After she woke up, Nasima stood in front of a mirror and smiled. Until now, there had been a wall between the two women, largely due to language and cultural barriers but also because of the respect Nasima had for the medical profession. Rosanna realized that she was becoming Nasima's friend.

Since that day, God has shown Rosanna methods for treating Nasima's body and soul.

"Now, if I'm late, she teasingly asks me why," said Rosanna. "We pray before every therapy session, and I never leave their house without an 'I love you' in Nasima's recently learned English."

Nasima and her husband have invited Rosanna and Gunther to eat with them many times and have given them gifts from their hearts.

God in His mercy has allowed Nasima's health to improve in some ways, and she is now experiencing very little pain.

Please pray for the ministry of Rosanna, Gunther, and their team as they provide physical healing for their patients and lead them to Jesus for the spiritual healing that only He can bring.

* Names have been changed.

Rosanna, who is earning a master's degree in nursing, participates in the "Waldensian Student" initiative, a frontline mission approach in which Seventh-day Adventist students live, study, and serve in secular universities in specific countries throughout the Middle East and North Africa.

Following Christ's example of outreach, they mingle with people, win their confidence, minister to their needs, and as opportunities arise, bid them to follow Jesus.

For information on how to become a "Waldensian Student," contact Questions@adventistmission.org.

To sponsor their unique ministry, visit Global-Mission.org/giving and select the "Waldensian Student" Program.



The Cyber Church

“In this crazy little virtual world, God found me and fed me what I needed to make me whole.”

1



At the time this story was written, **Chelsy Tyler** worked in the Office of Adventist Mission.

People are finding God in virtual reality. Even as a 20-something “digital native,” I was intrigued.

I was visiting Daystar Adventist Community Church, a Global Mission-funded virtual church plant. It began in 2010 when computer software developer Bob Curtice, then-university student Theo Zelin, and stay-at-home mom Pheona Avon dreamed of creating a Seventh-day Adventist church in *Second Life*. *Second Life* is an online virtual world that allows users to meet other users from around the world, create and buy content, participate in individual and group activities (like worshiping in churches), and more. Seeing that other Christian denominations had already established cyber churches in *Second Life*, Bob, Theo, and Pheona wanted to form an Adventist presence there as well. On September 17, 2010, Daystar Adventist Community Church was dedicated and held its first virtual service in *Second Life* with attendees from around the world. It’s been holding Sabbath services online every week since.

I sat in on one of these services—well, my avatar did. In this

cyber world, users create *avatars*—graphical representations of themselves—to get around, speak with other users, and participate in various activities. After I finally figured out how to get my avatar to sit on a pew (it was my first time in virtual reality), I took in my surroundings. Nearby sat the Information Center, where people could watch Amazing Facts TV and read Adventist publications. Inside the church, a female avatar played a hymn on the piano. Other avatars were scattered about the pews, gazing up at the display screens where a recording of Doug Batchelor played. It was definitely a church experience I had never had before!

After the service, I chatted with the attendees to find out how they came to this cyber church. Many were from other denominations or other faiths entirely. Some were bedridden and

couldn’t easily make it to a church in real life, didn’t feel comfortable returning to a church in real life, or had no church to turn to at all.

One such attendee was a man whose username was LightWave. He described finding the cyber church “like finding water in the desert.” Living in a closed country, LightWave felt God calling him to learn more about the Bible. As he began to secretly read the Bible and watch sermons online, he came across the Adventist message and felt convicted of its truth. But he felt isolated; he craved fellowship with other believers, particularly Adventists, but he knew that trying to find other believers in his country would risk his safety.

One day, LightWave felt God leading him to look into an online community of Adventists. Through a series of links and webpages he had never visited before, he found *Second Life*, where he immediately

Explore the Cyber Church

To learn more about this Adventist virtual church ministry, go to gospellarningcenter.com/SDAChurch.aspx.

began looking for an Adventist church.

He finally found Daystar and eagerly went to check it out. But as he approached the cyber church, his heart sank. The church was empty! He began to lose hope and was about to close his account when another avatar appeared. He told LightWave that the cyber church was empty because the attendees weren't online, but LightWave could join them for worship on Saturday!

LightWave eagerly returned the following Sabbath and worshiped with the Adventist virtual community, even though the service was at two o'clock in the morning his local time. Connecting with Bob, he began taking Bible prophecy studies and learning about Adventist beliefs. He's come many Sabbaths since, at last finding the Christian fellowship he craved.

"These avatars are my family now," LightWave shared. "I feel mentally like I'm physically with other believers. For me, it's my underground church."

LightWave wasn't the only one to find community in the Adventist cyber church at a crucial point in his life. Outside of the virtual world, Sadiestark's family was on the brink. Her husband was drinking excessively and doing drugs, her daughter was also involved with drugs and getting in trouble with the law, and her parents died in a car accident. Reeling from these crises, Sadiestark came to virtual reality looking for people who could understand her.

She met Theo when shopping for content in *Second Life*. Aside from coordinating the cyber church, Theo was a social worker and a photographer selling nature photos online. Sadiestark bought some of his art, and when she learned about the social work he was involved in, jumped at the chance to gain his advice on her family situation. In their conversations, Theo invited Sadiestark to visit Daystar. She wasn't looking for a church, but she began to attend.

There, she met more people involved in social work, even one who was experienced in the juvenile justice system who could counsel her about her daughter. Sadiestark unknowingly found a whole network of people who could guide her through her family challenges. "What are the chances that four social workers would come into my life?" she said. "I don't know what I would have done if I didn't have the virtual world to support me."

This was coupled with the spiritual support she garnered as she continued attending the cyber church. "I received so many messages through the sermons that I really needed at the time," Sadiestark shared. "I would come to church and be needing something, but I didn't know what. But then the message would come."

Sadly, her daughter died in 2016 from a drug overdose. Despite losing most of her family in a few short years, Sadiestark



found the cyber church to be just what she needed to support her through this difficult time. She expressed, “In this crazy little virtual world, God found me and fed me what I needed to make me whole.”

Bob realized the virtual oasis that Daystar is to people like LightWave, Sadiestark, and others. “I have found,” he said, “in working and supporting the virtual church, that it’s really about person-to-person connections that are made which provide opportunities to lead people to Jesus. . . . There is a real person behind the avatar, and the Holy Spirit reaches that person’s heart anyway. God has no limit on whom He can connect with.”

Bob is further connecting the virtual church plant to a local Adventist church in real life. He created a virtual world extension called Gospel World, where Daystar attendees can better engage in an interactive church experience rather than simply watching a live stream. Gospel World also allows church members in real life to join in the ministry of the cyber church.

Your selfless gifts and prayers enable unique Global Mission church plants such as the cyber church reach out to people who are looking

for spiritual community and who are wanting to learn more about Jesus. Thank you for your support that makes stories like these possible.



Through your support of Global Mission, churches such as this are planted

- in areas or among people groups where there’s no Adventist presence.
- to share the good news of Jesus through holistic ministry, such as providing medical care, teaching agricultural skills, offering literacy programs, holding evangelistic meetings, and giving Bible studies.

To donate, visit Global-Mission.org/giving.

- 1 Bob’s avatar stands in front of the entrance to the Daystar Adventist Community Church.
- 2 Daystar’s attendees watch a Doug Batchelor sermon for Sabbath worship. My avatar sits in the second row just right of the aisle.
- 3 Me exploring the cyber church’s information center.
- 4 LightWave, a seeker from a closed country, was led by God to the cyber church.
- 5 Sadiestark, who found in Daystar virtual church a professional and spiritual community at a crucial time in her real life.



Of All the Things She Could Have Said



At the time she wrote this story, **Shelley Nolan Freesland** was the communication director for Adventist World Radio.

After receiving training from AWR, Daniella Mwange became one of the producers at Adventist Radio Namibia.

How quickly can God use a new station to save lives? Our resource engineer, Sammy Gregory, was startled to find out when he returned to Namibia a few weeks ago.

Sammy had crisscrossed the country to install four new transmitters earlier in the summer. Now he was back to set up studios at each location. The stations had been broadcasting prerecorded programs in the interim, but now they were ready to go live from the central studio.

"I had just made the change to a live feed," Sammy says, "and I heard the presenter say: 'If you're feeling down, if you're feeling troubled and thinking of taking your life, please don't do that! Pray, ask God for support, and He will help you.'"

This is the first thing that goes out through the radio? Sammy thought. He later had the opportunity to speak with Adventist Radio Namibia director Reagan Malumo. To his amazement, he found out that just after that broadcast, the

presenter had received a call. The caller said, "I was about to take my life, but because of your words, I'm giving God a chance."

Sammy says, "This is what radio is about! We may never know the full impact of this work until we get to heaven."

Soon after this testimony, Sammy heard another report from Reagan. This time, the radio had made a deep impression on a man named Alpheus Areab. He was the leader of a Christian church that had 14 branches and 350 members.

Alpheus had come across a program on Adventist Radio Namibia that presented the Sabbath. He approached a local Adventist church, went through Bible studies, and decided to get baptized.

"I am a lucky man who just received this hidden truth," Alpheus said. He decided to introduce his newfound knowledge to his members and encouraged them to become Adventists, too. Some of them were disappointed in him and decided to leave, but

the majority followed Alpheus and started worshipping on Saturday.

Alpheus wanted his followers to first learn more about the Sabbath before getting baptized. So he planned a large meeting for all of them and invited a local pastor to be the guest speaker and teacher.

"Adventist Radio Namibia is a great blessing to the people," Alpheus says. "We listened to the English programs. But if possible, could you fast-track broadcasts in the Damara Nama language?"

Reagan says, "There are very few Adventists in this language group. They believe in spirits and are very hard to evangelize. So that's why these new members are so important."

He adds, "Now we can see why it took more than five years to get a radio license in Namibia: Satan doesn't want God's message to be heard here. But we need to continue trying to find people who can produce in these languages so even more listeners can find hope and salvation."



Adventist World Radio (AWR) is the international broadcast ministry of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Programs are currently available in more than 100 languages via shortwave, AM/FM, on demand, podcasts, Call-to-Listen service, solar audio players, social media, and cell phone evangelism. 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, visit M360.tv/awr.

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



I Ate Like A God



Daniel Duffis Jr. served as a volunteer English teacher at Northeast Brazil College in Brazil. Living in the United States, he pastors a church in Queens, New York, and is earning a PhD in missiology from Andrews University in Michigan.

It was love at first bite. I wanted—no, needed—more of this amazing dish!

I discovered it in Cachoeira, a small, historical, inland city in the state of Bahia, Brazil. It was only about a 10-minute drive from the Adventist college where I'd spent the past six months serving as a volunteer teacher. After a hectic week, I enjoyed escaping to this town to explore and embrace its culture.

During one of my visits, my friend Sanzia urged me to try a traditional street food known as *acarajé*, a small, round fritter made from black-eyed beans.

We walked around the city until we finally found a *tia* (auntie) ready to wow us with her culinary skills by frying the perfect *acarajé* on the spot.

"You can eat the *acarajé* plain or with a filling," Sanzia said. "They'll cut a hole in the fritter and fill it with something delicious. But you have to make sure that both the filling you choose and the *acarajé* itself aren't made with shrimp. I always ask to make sure."

We ordered our *acarajés*, and after waiting five torturing minutes, I finally took a bite. My taste buds were rejoicing, and my stomach was in full delight as I savored every bit of this amazing Brazilian dish. Neither Sanzia nor I could resist the temptation; we ordered two more!

A few weeks later, I was invited by my friend Carol and her family to visit the city of Jequié. One night while we were there, she tapped me on the shoulder and said, "Guess what we're going to

eat? *Acarajé!*" My stomach growled in anticipation. I couldn't wait to see whether the *acarajé* in this region delivered the same magical sensation I had experienced before.

I asked Carol if we were going to the town square. "No," she replied, "we don't eat *acarajé* on the street."

"Oh, right, the shrimp," I responded.

"Well, yes, but we purchase them at a friend's restaurant because she's a Christian and doesn't offer *acarajé* to the gods."

I chuckled a bit. "The gods?"

"Why are you laughing?" she asked. "Don't you know, *acarajé* is a dish that's offered to one of the gods of the *Candomblé* religion? Of course, we avoid buying them from the street vendors."

Although I had known about *Candomblé*, I was unaware of its connection to this dish. I nodded in agreement as I listened to Carol, but inside I was screaming, *Street food always tastes better!*

Being a theologian, my brain began to draw upon biblical texts to present my case later. I wanted to mention that Paul says that food offered to idols should make no difference to believers (1 Corinthians 8:1–13). I wanted to lead my blind friends out of their darkness into a new and marvelous theological light.

As thoughts raced in my head, Carol's father overheard our conversation. "Do you know why my name is Cosme?" he asked. "My family, especially my mother, was heavily involved in *Candomblé*. So much so that when my twin brother and I were born, she decided to call us *Cosme* and *Damian* in honor of the twin gods of that religion. We were heavily influenced by her devotion to this religious practice."

Then it dawned on me. Although I didn't express my thoughts verbally, I had been completely intolerant toward this family and their worldview. Later, as I sat back and reflected upon the situation more calmly, two lessons emerged that challenged my spiritual growth.

First, I needed to be more empathetic. Being right isn't always the goal. In wanting to prove my point that we had the freedom to eat *acarajé* on the street without incurring the guilt of idol worship, I hadn't considered the negative connotations the dish had for this family. I had attempted to "demythologize" my friends' experience, which, for them, was real spiritual warfare that had been fought in their home.

I wanted to show them the light



Hear from other volunteers at m360.tv/avs.

with my “progressive” theology, but I had completely neglected the importance of their spiritual journey. I needed to step into their shoes and see what they were seeing. Empathy places us in a position of tolerance and helps us to avoid hurting others.

Second, life choices aren’t always presented to us in black and white. What we consider to be “right” in one context can be “wrong” in another and can even become a hindrance to someone else’s faith (1 Corinthians 8:9). Therefore, the Bible doesn’t always point out the right answer for every specific circumstance but places upon us the responsibility to analyze and decide the best action for each situation.

Thus, contextualization isn’t just about studying culture and finding relevant ways to share the gospel. It also emphasizes the need to be connected to God and to be guided by the Holy Spirit who gives us wisdom (James 1:5) when faced with the gray areas of life.

My love for *acarajé* hasn’t died, but who knew that a simple dish could change my mindset so drastically? At least I can jokingly say that I ate “like a god.”



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





Hope for EX-OFFENDERS



Lucas L. Johnson II

is a former reporter for The Associated Press. He is also the author of the book *Finding the Good*, which was featured on National Public Radio. Reprinted and adapted with permission from the *Southern Tidings*

After serving three years in prison for burglary, Shane Echols had paid his debt to society and hoped to start a new life. But he was worried.

He had been in a similar position once before. When he was released, the prison gave him a hundred dollars and a bus ticket, but he didn't know where to go. Even worse, because of his felony record, he wasn't able to get a job. Shane ended up going back to what he knew: a life of crime, which landed him back in prison.

This time, however, the 44-year-old's fears were laid to rest when he contacted Jeffrey Cobb, founder of Shelter From the Storm, a transitional living home, or halfway house, for ex-offenders in Gainesville, Florida. Jeffrey not only provided Shane with a place to stay but also gave him a job with his lawn service.

"I thank God for Mr. Cobb," said Shane, who met Jeffrey when the older ex-offender visited his prison and testified about changing his life. "I've been out of prison just two days, and I'm already working. I'm not going back."

With prisons lacking adequate rehabilitation initiatives, transitional programs like Jeffrey's, operated or supported by the Seventh-day Adventist Church, are helping to fill the gap.

Political consultant David Keene alluded to the difficulty ex-offenders have reacclimating

in an interview for the Academy Award-nominated documentary *13th*, which explores mass incarceration in the United States (US) prison system.

"While they're [ex-offenders] in prison, [the prison system is] doing very little, if anything, to rehabilitate them so that they can re-enter civil society when they get out. And then when they get out, we shun them."

One study by the US Department of Justice tracked more than 400,000 prisoners in 30 states after their release from prison in 2005. The study found that, within nine years, 83 percent were rearrested.

Jeffrey, 55, started Shelter From the Storm in 2001 after experiencing firsthand the difficulty of finding a place to stay and employment after being released. During his 20 years of criminal activity, he was incarcerated 10 times. His life changed, however, when he took Bible studies from an Adventist who came to visit him.

Jeffrey said he felt the Holy Spirit move in his life, and he decided that he "didn't want to go back to that lifestyle." He also determined that, when he got out, he was going to start his own business and a program to help other released offenders.

He did both. His transitional home provides shelter for four men, and his lawn service provides

them with employment. Jeffrey plans to add more housing for men and add a home for women.

In 2007, Leo Tate, who has been in prison ministry for more than 40 years, founded Lia Transitional House, Inc., in Memphis, Tennessee. The four-bedroom transitional home gives ex-offenders a place to stay; helps them find employment; and assists with drug recovery, literacy, and money management.

"The Lord has given me a vision," said Leo, who believes there would be more programs to help ex-offenders if all churches heeded the words in Matthew 25:36 about remembering those in prison. Leo hopes to purchase and renovate a local school so he can help even more people. He's also planning a first-of-its-kind prison ministry convention in Memphis.

Earl Gator, a 46-year-old man who spent 11 years in jail, credits family support and a man who attends his Seventh-day Adventist church in Nashville, Tennessee, with helping him stay out of prison. "The gentleman took me under his wing and taught me how to paint," Earl said. As a result, Earl became a painting contractor who works with the founder of a Nashville-based transitional living program called Aphesis House, teaching ex-offenders a painting trade.

Like Jeffrey Cobb, Aphesis House's founder James Settles

turned his life around in prison and vowed to start a transitional living program when he was released. James was released in 1994 and started Aphasis House in 2003 when a family heard about his effort and donated a home, allowing him to open his first halfway house.

Aphasis House now operates four facilities that serve 28 men, but the local needs continue to grow—there’s a waiting list of about 200 men. James plans to build another facility to accommodate as many people as possible.

Currently, Aphasis House is a leader in transitional housing services in middle Tennessee and has published materials on how to start effective recovery programs.

“God is using Aphasis House to provide the kind of facility where men can get the life skills they need to live a better life,” James said.

One of those men is Tim Holt, who has been living a successful life since leaving Aphasis House 12 years ago. Tim said its relapse prevention program and behavior modification classes were particularly helpful in changing his lifestyle.

“Aphasis House helped me to grow into the man I am today,” said Tim, who is now married and owns a house. “I’m blessed.”

MISSION to the CITIES

The Mission to the Cities initiative outlines a wholistic, comprehensive, ongoing urban discipleship process that meets people’s needs and then offers opportunities to develop a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. This initiative is part of the General Conference’s “Reach the World” strategic plan. To learn more about this initiative and see how you can be a part, please visit MissionToTheCities.org.



1



2

1 Jeffrey Cobb, *right*, founder and director of Shelter From the Storm transitional ministry, with Derrick Williams, Edwin Sanchez, and Shane Echols at one of their job sites.

2 Leo Tate, *second from left*, the founder of the Lia Transitional House, Inc., leads a Friday evening Bible study. Guests include Jeffrey Cobb, *left*, director of Shelter From the Storm; Margaret Tate, co-founder of the Lia Transitional House, Inc.; and clients Roderick Seay and William Garrett.

3 Aphasis House founder James Settles.



3



26 MILES

Sheer terror. That's the only thing I can think of that describes our feelings in the situation we were in.

One of our doctors, Sarah, called me at one o'clock in the morning. "Hey Danae, can you please come to help me with a uterine rupture?"

"OK, I'll be right there."

Sarah had been up laboring with a pregnant woman. Her contractions had stopped, so Sarah vacuumed out the baby. Tragically, the baby was already dead. But the patient kept bleeding and bleeding. Sarah realized the woman had ruptured her uterus and called me. A tear in the uterus is extremely rare in America, but it seems that it's my bread and butter here.

I head to the operating room to meet Sarah. Five saucer-eyed nursing students stare back at me, clueless as to how bad the situation is. I call the anesthetist, Philippe, and as we wait for him to arrive, we try to get a good IV in the patient. But all we have is a tiny catheter that's unable to drip fluid into her fast enough. It's never going to work. I apply firm pressure on her lower abdomen with a second hand inside her to try to compress the bleeding vessels, but it isn't helpful.

Instinct sets in: must stop bleeding.

"Foley, please. Call the other nurses from the other services. We need a good IV! Call Staci to come help." We have nobody here to do anesthesia. My physician husband, Olen, is out of town. Staci, another doctor, can help direct care. Still nothing better for an IV.

Any moment, Philippe should walk through that door and place a good IV, and we'll be all set. I just have to stop the bleeding right now.

No Philippe, but Staci shows up.

The patient starts making gasping sounds.

I cut into her abdomen with zero anesthetic. She's lost so much blood that she barely flinches. (Not a good sign.) I grab the uterus at its base, stopping the flow of blood. That's all I can do for now. She's so close to death. It doesn't matter whether I do a hysterectomy or not now. I've stopped the bleeding with my hand, but if we can't get a better IV, we'll lose her. I just squeeze.

She has no blood pressure, no response, no sign of life. Philippe, our anesthetist, shows up. He tries to get a better IV. We administer all the appropriate medications and fluids. But it's all simply too late.

I ask Sarah to squeeze the uterus while I start chest compressions. I'm trying to run the code, directing traffic to give chest compressions and breath for the patient and give IV medication. Too late. All too late.

Just keep pumping. She can't die. She labored at our hospital. She's *our* patient.

My hands and arms grow tired. The sweat is dripping down my face. Thinking what else to do. But it's too late.

After a long time, while we're still trying to resuscitate the patient, I go out to talk to her family. Her husband is there. I ask how many children they have. Three. I tell them how bad the situation is.

I go back inside. We've tried resuscitating her for more than an hour. We call it. She's dead.

I give the news to the family. The mother of the patient was in the maternity ward and wasn't

told her daughter was actively dying. Now, she's actively grieving.

Even when there's a death, there's still work to be done. We do a cesarean section on a patient that was supposed to be done prior to this last emergency. Everything goes well, but now it's five o'clock in the morning. We're all beat. We debrief some and then go home to sleep a couple of hours. Sheer exhaustion. That's what happens after a stressful situation like this. Sheer depression.

The next day at work, I find out the patient had been waiting for a month at the hospital so that she could have a safe delivery. The baby died in labor, and the mother died after a vacuum delivery from a postpartum hemorrhage. A month living at the hospital to ensure she didn't die in labor at home. And she dies here, instead.

Deeper depression sets in. We failed. I failed. After a month of being safe.


But there's still more work to be done. I still need to go around and see all the hospitalized patients. Operations on normal cases. Lots of consults. Sarah had gone home to get some rest. I told her that she should take the day off because she had been up most of the night. But she's taking it too hard to be at home, so she comes back to work in the afternoon to help us with the consults. She's amazing and smart and strong.

She presents a patient to me named Deborah* who had a vesico-vaginal fistula, an opening between her bladder and her vagina. It was the result of being forced to labor at home for days before finally being allowed to go to the health center to deliver her baby.

Deborah had come to us as a very sad case three years before. Olen had walked by her and smelled her diagnosis. She stunk



Originally from the United States, **Danae Netteburg** is an obstetrician/gynecologist who has served in Chad for more than eight years.



If God speaks
to your heart,
listen. You
never know
who's day
you could be
changing.

of concentrated urine, and one could see the drops of urine falling out from under her skirt. At home, things were terrible. Her husband had despised her. Nobody wanted her around. Deborah was rotting away out in the savannah until she somehow made it to our hospital. I operated on her two times to cure her fistula. But these patients often get lost to follow up, and some of them leak again after they go home from being forced to work too early.

I'm surprised that Deborah's here to be operated on again. I'm already depressed, and now this woman comes back who wasn't fixed by my major surgeries on her.

But I misunderstood with the language barriers. When I examine her, she isn't leaking urine. She's been dry since I did two surgeries on her back in 2015. I had told her then to not work until her follow-up visit with me. Well, now three years later, she's back for her visit. She hasn't done any major work for three years. She was too

nervous about the fistula breaking open. On her exam, everything is normal. She's cured.

Deborah explains she's been arguing with her husband about whether she should be working or not and came back today to ask whether she should. Should she start carrying things on her head and working in the fields this year?

Three years. Three years, and she chose today to come back and ask this simple question! With tears in my eyes, I tell Deborah that today has been an extremely awful day, and I believe God sent her for this very moment to tell me she has been cured. He

spoke to her heart so she could encourage me.

I ask Deborah where she lives. She replies that she lives well past Kélo, a town 26 miles away. She got to Kélo and didn't have any more money to continue her journey, so she walked the remaining 26 miles to our hospital just to ask whether she should start working again three years after she was healed.

If God speaks to your heart, listen. You never know who's day you could be changing. I'm so thankful Deborah listened to God's voice and was stubborn enough to walk 26 miles!

* Name has been changed.

Your weekly mission offerings, collected during Sabbath School or given online at [Giving.AdventistMission.org](https://giving.adventistmission.org), help fund the medical mission work of the church around the world. Thank you for your support!



Referral for HEALING



Earley Simon
Office of
Adventist
Mission

Hepsiba works at a dental clinic in Bengaluru, India, across the street from the Adventist Vibrant Life Medical and Wellness Clinic. She often refers patients to the Adventist clinic because it was there that she found hope and healing.

Vibrant Life is an Urban Center of Influence (UCI) that offers lifestyle solutions for chronic diseases such as diabetes, hypertension, and obesity. Hepsiba came here with many ailments and received massage and hydrotherapy that vastly improved her health.

“After treatment, I could literally feel the pain relieving out of me,” she shares. “It was a great experience. Since then, I have been visiting them very frequently.”

Hepsiba recommended that her diabetic mother-in-law also seek treatment at Vibrant Life, and Hepsiba saw healing that she never thought possible. “For almost eight to nine years, we have not seen her sugar levels come down to less than 390. We tried all treatments, but they didn’t bring her sugar levels down.”

But after three months of visiting Vibrant Life and receiving counseling, a special diet, and medication, this picture changed dramatically. “Last month,” says Hepsiba, “her sugar levels were 97, which was unbelievable for us.”

Today, many people come to the Vibrant Life Medical and Wellness Clinic because of Hepsiba’s enthusiastic referral. “Every day,

I’ve referred at least two patients there,” she says.

As heads of the UCI, Drs. Narendra and Daisy Rao teach their patients about the impact of lifestyle choices on their health. The staff put on health expos coupled with screenings and counseling to raise awareness of relevant topics for this community. “There’s a great need for lifestyle



Watch this story in action at m360.tv/s18211.



interventions in our country,” Dr. Daisy Rao says, “because we have, at present, nearly 70 million people with diabetes, about 30 million with heart disease, and another 30 million who are obese.”

This center of influence attracts many educated and influential

individuals from all over the city. Many pick up free health literature and Bibles as they await their investigations or consultations. Here they experience not only physical healing but emotional and spiritual as well.

Your support of Global Mission

helps Vibrant Life and other UCIs around the world share Jesus by meeting people’s needs. Please pray for the health ministry work in this large metropolis. Pray that this clinic can become a model for many more in the vast country of India.



- 1 Because of the healing she experienced at Vibrant Life Medical and Wellness Clinic, Hebsiba often visits as well as refers patients there.
- 2 Dr. Narendra Rao, center, and Dr. Daisy Rao, second from left, with their Vibrant Life team.
- 3 Patients at Vibrant Life learn the importance of exercise in combating chronic diseases.



Urban Centers of Influence (UCIs)

Adventist Mission supports wholistic mission to the cities. This includes a rapidly growing number of UCIs that serve as platforms for putting Christ’s method of ministry into practice and as ideal opportunities for Total Member Involvement in outreach that suits each person’s spiritual gifts and passions. To learn more about UCIs or to support their ministry, visit MissionToTheCities.org.

Forgotten Trailblazers

UNEARTHING STORIES OF OUR MISSION PIONEERS



Chigemezi Nnadozie Wogu is a

researcher for the *Encyclopedia of Seventh-day Adventists* for the Inter-European and Euro-Asian Divisions.

The *Encyclopedia of Seventh-day Adventists* (ESDA) is a global church project that will produce a brand-new reference work for the Seventh-day Adventist Church. In my research for ESDA, I have learned of the contributions of many missionaries who, until now, remained largely unknown. A few of those missionaries are Elisabeth Redelstein and Karl and Clärle F. Noltze.

Elisabeth Redelstein

Elisabeth Redelstein was born on December 8, 1891, in Germany. She was one of the most influential missionary nurses the Seventh-day Adventist Church has ever had. Her leadership roles in China and Taiwan helped raise and maintain new Adventist hospitals in both countries. These hospitals were harbingers of health innovation at a time when health care was considered a luxury in those regions.

Redelstein even ministered to the Chinese ruling family. From 1928 on, she was acquainted with Madame Chiang Kai-shek, the Chinese first lady. She accompanied the first lady and the Generalissimo on several trips in China around mid-1935. She also accompanied Madame Chang Hsueh-liang (whose name was Yu Fengzhi), wife of the famed “Young Marshal” of China, to Europe in 1936. Her relationship with the Chinese ruling class put the Adventist denomination in the limelight while fostering cordial relations between the Chinese government and Adventists.¹

Sometime later, Redelstein worked as a translator for the United States Army in Germany during the Nuremberg trials of October 1945. In 1970, she was among 10 nurses voted into the Association of Seventh-day Adventist Nurses’ (ASDAN) hall of fame.² In 1975, the year designated by the United Nations as the International Women’s year, she was among the women honored by the General Conference in session during a special service on July 15.³


In 1978, when Redelstein was 86, the Israeli Health Department set up a scholarship fund in her name for young Israeli postgraduate nurses to continue their education in the United States. The fund was the result of an unexpected friendship between Redelstein and Olga Hoffmann, a Jewish lawyer from Tel Aviv. They met in Germany during the Nuremberg trials where Hoffmann served as a legal representative. “The Jew and the German developed a lasting friendship,” writes Yvonne Hanson, “and 32 years later Mrs. Hoffmann explains her action in a letter dated December 1977: ‘To find a diamond in the sand is nothing compared to finding a person so straight, upright, dependable, and ready to help

as you are.’”⁴ Elisabeth Redelstein died on August 15, 1987, at the age of 95.

Karl and Clärle F. Noltze

Karl F. Noltze was born on September 14, 1903, in Tübingen, Germany, and served 45 years as a missionary, a pastor, and an administrator for the Adventist Church. As a pioneer missionary and church administrator, he worked to establish and strengthen the mission of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Liberia. Noltze’s 14 years of service saw the building of three mission stations as well as schools. In addition to providing a quality education, the schools taught new believers a variety of skills, greatly increasing their opportunities for employment. Noltze’s wife, Clärle, who was at the forefront of their medical mission activities, contributed to a sustainable livelihood for the people to whom her husband preached the gospel.

Noltze was an ardent writer, and his reports contributed to the expanding knowledge of Liberia.⁵ Noltze also translated many songs and stories into Kpelle, one of the local Liberian languages. With his knowledge of the Kpelle language, he helped Diedrich Westermann, a professor from Berlin, Germany,



publish a practical orthography of African languages and a monumental work on the languages of West Africa.⁶ Noltze became one of the few early Adventist Africanists.⁷ He died of a heart attack at the age of 88 on February 22, 1992.

- 1 See Redelstein's articles for the *Adventist Review and Sabbath Herald*, "My Year With China's First Lady," parts 1, 2, 3 and 4, November 4, 11, 18, 25, 1943.
- 2 ASDAN is a professional Adventist organization of registered and vocational nurses started in 1967 in the United States. Norma Eldridge, "ASDAN's Third Annual Meeting," *North Pacific Union Gleaner*, June 8, 1970, 12.
- 3 "Honored Women of the Church," *The Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, August 7–14, 1975, 26.
- 4 Yvonne J. Hanson, "Israeli Scholarship Honors Adventist," *Adventist Review*, April 6, 1978, 27.
- 5 See Karl Noltze, "Die Liberia Mission," *Der Adventbote*, December 15, 1929, 381–383.
- 6 See, for example, Diedrich Westermann, *The Languages of West Africa* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1952).
- 7 Others were Ernst Kotz and Rudolf Reider.

“To find a diamond in the sand is nothing compared to finding a person so straight, upright, dependable, and ready to help as you are.”

WE NEED YOUR HELP!

The Encyclopedia of Seventh-day Adventists (ESDA) team needs assistance from volunteers to write articles; provide historical information based on oral traditions; and submit missionary letters, photographs, and relics. If you would like to contribute, please contact the ESDA office at encyclopedia@gc.adventist.org or on Twitter, @EncyclopediaSDA.



Ruth, *right*, with Mariana, a church planter who shared Jesus with her in jail.

The Setup

Author's note:

In Ecuador, I met a team of church planters who are sharing Christ's love in a city jail. They've helped hundreds of people come to know Jesus, including an ex-convict named Ruth. This is her story.



By **Ruth Ramirez** as told to **Laurie Falvo**, Office of Adventist Mission

Life was good for me. I'd become a professional singer, I had many friends, and I was earning good money. I was born and raised in Ecuador, but I had built a happy life in Italy.

Then about eight years ago, I decided to return to Ecuador to visit my children and sister. When an acquaintance heard about my upcoming trip, he asked me to take a package to give to his family back home. Many Ecuadorian acquaintances living in Italy had made similar requests of me before, so I didn't give it a second thought.

After I arrived in Ecuador, some family members of my acquaintance in Italy came to get the package. "Why don't you take these drugs back with you to Italy," they asked, handing me a small package. "We'll pay you 8,000 euros to do it."

I told them I wasn't interested.

A few days later, they approached me again, this time with an offer of 10,000 euros. Again, I refused.

I hoped I'd never see them again, but a couple days later, they were back. This time they had guns, and they took my children and my sister hostage. I was so scared. I took the package; I had no choice.

On my return trip to Italy, my worst nightmare came true. I was caught for drug trafficking and eventually sentenced to eight years in prison.

In jail, I became very depressed. I even tried to kill myself.

Then one day while I was working at my job making purses, a group of Seventh-day Adventists held a church service at the prison. As always, I was very angry with everyone, so I was making as much noise as possible with my hammer to be disruptive. Mariana, one of the Adventists, invited me to come worship with them. I had no desire to hear about God, so I refused and kept working. But then I hammered one of my fingers really hard. At that point, I figured I could use a break so I sat down to listen to the sermon. I couldn't believe what I was hearing—it seemed like the message was meant specifically for me. I started crying; I didn't know what to do.

After the service, Mariana gave me a Bible. I began reading it and attending church regularly. I fell in love with God's Word. My life, which had been pretty wild in the past, slowly began to change. Now, thank God, I'm a completely different person.

Mariana gave me Bible studies, and when I accepted Jesus, she encouraged me to get baptized. "No," I told her. "I've made a promise to God that I'll get baptized when I'm released from jail." And I kept that promise. Thanks to His mercy, I only served four years and four months of my eight-year sentence. When I was released three years ago, I joined a loving Adventist church.

I didn't have any money to get a place to live, but my church friends scraped together enough for me to rent a single room in someone's house.

I had no bed to sleep on the first night, so I laid a piece of flat wood on the floor and fell asleep. Around six o'clock in the evening, I received a phone call. "Sister Mariana told me you need a bed, so I'm bringing one over now," the church member said. Over the next few hours, other church

members brought me blankets, clothes, food, and even a little stove!

Sometimes, I still struggle to make ends meet. But I have the best thing, and that's God's love in my life. He's always there for me, and I've never been alone. I'm free now, in every sense of the word.



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“I Want to Know **MORE**”



Tandi Perkins is the director of development for Arctic Mission Adventure at the Alaska Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, United States.

I met Toni and Buck¹ at a sandwich shop, where all three of us lamented being stranded at the Anchorage, Alaska, airport. They wore the tired, ragged look of people who had spent the past four days at the airport. I sat across from them as they finished the last of the soup they were sharing, the whiff of alcohol escaping with every bite. I had nothing to complain about with my two-hour delay compared to their long ordeal of getting back home to Saint Mary’s village in bush² Alaska.

Over time, lamenting turned to inquiry as they asked about me. They thought I was a teacher, then a health care worker. I told them I was heading to Dillingham for our church camp meeting. They looked at me blankly. I shared that I had just moved to Alaska to work for the Seventh-day Adventist Church. My job was to build awareness of the challenges that native Alaskans face and to provide support for the Arctic Mission Adventure program. I could tell my message fell on deaf ears.

While Buck assured me that they were religious, Toni’s face fell, her countenance darkening once she found out that I was a “church person.” With her head still bowed, Toni whispered that church people didn’t come around very often in Saint Mary’s. I felt shallow, a green do-gooder who was clearly disconnected from these people.

I looked at them with as much love as I could muster and said, “Life is so hard, isn’t it?” Toni lifted her head and looked deep into my eyes. I told them that we’re put on this earth to love each other like Christ loved us. He didn’t judge anyone. He found those who needed encouragement and accepted them, put His arms around them, and held them. I told them that’s what I believe, that’s what my church believes, and that’s why I’m here—to share what Christ has done in my life. As tears streamed down their faces, Toni said, “I want to know more.”

Suddenly, a woman’s voice came over the airport intercom announcing that my flight was boarding. As I stared into the eyes of the couple in front of me, dark with the hopelessness and despair familiar to many Alaskans, I felt helpless. Alaska has more than 230 villages, but our Arctic Mission volunteers are present in only a handful of them. And the village of Saint Mary’s isn’t one of them.

I asked if I could pray with Toni and Buck and reached for their hands. I asked God to reach down and hold these precious souls, to love them and direct them in the way that He would have them go. As Toni wiped her tears, we said our goodbyes, and I headed to the gate.

From my window seat on the plane, Toni’s words kept ringing in my ears: “I want to know more.” My mind traveled to Acts 16:9:

“That night Paul had a vision: A man from Macedonia in northern Greece was standing there, pleading with him, ‘Come over to Macedonia and help us!’” (NLT). My interaction with Toni and Buck was a present-day plea to go and preach, teach, and live out the gospel of Jesus Christ to bush Alaska.

Please pray for the people of Alaska and the Alaska Conference’s Arctic Missions program. To learn more, visit the Arctic Mission Adventure website, arcticmissionadventure.org, or their Facebook page at facebook.com/ArcticMissionAdventure/.

¹ Names have been changed.
² A region in Alaska not connected to the North American road network or the state’s ferry system.

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





More Than I Had Before



Corey Johnson graduated from Southern Adventist University in the United States and currently volunteers as the chaplain and Bible teacher for Palau Mission Academy.

Just like that, it was all gone. Stolen!

I had gone with a group of fellow missionaries to a party at our host family's house, where we were planning to spend the night. I'd left a bag of personal belongings and some gifts in the back of the van without a second thought—until we came back outside from the party. The gifts and my backpack containing my overnight clothes, my computer, and my Bible—by far one of my most valuable possessions—were gone!

I thought to myself, *Why did this happen?* The computer was new, and my Bible was one I'd had for several years. It was full of notes I'd made and thoughts I'd written about my experience as a believer. It was irreplaceable.

Nearly every missionary goes through moments when we wonder whether we made the right decision by coming to our host country. Any negative situation easily intensifies these doubts. That night, even in the midst of my fourth year in Palau, I felt these misgivings even more strongly.

I was greatly surprised a few days later when the secretary of the local Adventist church found

my bag on the steps of the church. I was thrilled to get my Bible back but the computer was gone, and I was sure I'd never see it again.

Many other challenges arose throughout the remaining school year, leaving me burned out. I was relieved to go home to the United States for the summer, but God wasn't going to leave me in my discouragement.

I was scheduled to speak at a summer camp for a week, and their theme verse happened to be my favorite Bible text, Isaiah 40:31, "But they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint."

For the many times I'd read that verse, it never occurred to me to read verse 27, the initial verse of the passage: "Why do you say, O Jacob, and speak, O Israel, 'My way is hidden from the Lord, and my just claim is passed over by my God?'" (NKJV).

A thought struck me: these verses were the answer to the very question I had been asking myself for the past seven months. I had wondered why God was making me go through the tough things I was experiencing. But I was reminded that He knew and cared about it all, and He was going to renew me. His Word gave me the encouragement I needed to share with the campers just how awesome He is. And praise God, several campers made decisions for Christ by the week's end.

At the end of the summer, I returned to Palau to serve another

year. There at a local restaurant, I ran into an acquaintance. "Hey, Corey, we need to talk," he said, walking outside with me. "Did you lose something recently?" he asked.

"Not recently," I replied. "But about eight months ago, some of my things were stolen, including a computer."

He then proceeded to tell me that he had bought a computer from a guy, who had bought a computer from another guy who had stolen it. "When I turned it on," he said, "I recognized your first name on the login screen. Think it could be yours?" I couldn't believe it. He later gave me back my computer, which I had written off as long gone.

It was nothing short of a miracle, nothing short of God demonstrating just how good He is. I didn't do anything to deserve to have all of my stolen items returned. And I know that during those months, my faith wasn't the strongest. But God came through for me, and after getting everything back, I have more than I had before—because I now have a testimony. Every time I use my Bible or my computer, it's a reminder of God's grace.

I don't know what you're going through, but I do know that God cares for you. He cares about every detail in your life, even things you may have written off. You never know when He's going to come through, shock you with a miracle, and inspire you to continue to share His goodness with those around you.



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



- 1 Hanging out with some of my students at Palau Mission Academy.
- 2 Posing with the kindergarten class at Palau SDA Elementary.
- 3 Teaching my junior Bible class at Palau Mission Academy.





CHAD



Trust the Knife

1



Tyler and Melissa Pender

graduated from Loma Linda University School of Medicine in 2017. While on their international medicine elective, they served at Bere Adventist Hospital in Chad. Now residents enrolled in the General Conference's Deferred Mission Appointee (DMA) program, they eagerly await returning to the mission field full time.

Every morning, the small boy cheerfully waited for us to come hurt him. He was 10 years old and had suffered a nasty fracture of his left leg months before our arrival. Dr. Bland, the American missionary surgeon we worked with, had removed a large portion of his tibia, but he still had an infection. Each morning, we took off the dressings, squeezed out pus, and repacked the wound with bleach-soaked gauze.

The boy was brave; as soon as the procedure was over, his bright smile returned. We took a few minutes each day to speak French with him and teach him intricate handshakes. Since he was alone at the hospital, we were the social highlight of his day. The rest of the time, he played with other young patients or watched *The Jesus Movie* in one of the local languages.

In medicine, sometimes we must cause pain to achieve healing. In order for us to do so,

patients, like this young boy, must trust that the physician has their best interest in mind and that the outcome will be an improvement.

Another patient who exemplified this confidence was a girl who was having difficulty breathing. She was too sick to ask for help, but her eyes begged us to intervene. As I examined her, I discovered she had a small bulge over the upper part of her chest on the left that seemed to contain fluid. Presuming it was an abscess, I put on gloves and prepared my instrument tray. Using the scalpel, I cut through the skin slowly until I entered the abscess. I positioned a basin underneath and then gently expanded the opening with a clamp. Yellow pus poured forth. The patient coughed, and the fluid spurted out with force.

My pleasure at successfully opening the abscess rapidly moved to a feeling of unease. The basin was overflowing already, and more pus continued to leak from

her chest. A small skin abscess couldn't produce this much. I looked into the incision and saw ribs on either side. She had an empyema—a large amount of pus in the space around her lung—which had been trying to rupture.

My wife, Melissa, came to help me, and together we switched out the basins. In my head, I played the American doctor game of "If only I had a . . ." I thought lovingly of the chest tube sets at Loma Linda University—so easy to use and so desperately needed in this case. Supplies and funding are very limited overseas, which is why ongoing donations are so important. With no real chest tube available, we continued to encourage her to cough.

In total, we got out more than three liters of infected pus. It was no longer a question of why the girl had had difficulty breathing; now we were impressed that she was still alive! Dr. Bland's missionary ingenuity came to the rescue

as he designed a makeshift pleural drain from a rubber catheter. The patient rested quietly, obviously breathing easier. Her trust in us had been rewarded.

We admitted her to the hospital, loaded her up on all the antibiotics we had available, and went home to pray. Per the textbooks, her chances of survival were low. However, textbooks don't factor in the resiliency of Chadian girls and certainly don't factor in the power of God. Every day, she gradually improved. In a few days, we were able to remove the drain, and soon she was a healthy little girl again. She was a walking miracle who would have died without the committed work of long-term missionaries, such as Dr. Bland, and the power of the Holy Spirit.

In Matthew 18:3, Jesus tells us that unless we become like little children, we shall not enter the kingdom of heaven. When I think of what He means, I think of those children in Chad who trusted us despite the pain. They knew they were sick, but they believed, despite not being able to communicate with me directly, that what I was doing would help them.

When I compare them to myself, I'm ashamed. I can read the Bible in my own language and can pray to God directly, yet when I encounter trouble, I too often accuse God of hurting me for no reason. I



lose sight of the fact that I'm sick with sin and in need of help. I also forget that God is working through the furnace of affliction (Isaiah 48:10) for His purposes and my good. God is working with each of us every day of our lives to fulfill His purpose, and He'll continue to give us strength for the struggle as long as we trust in Him.



Your weekly mission offerings and World Budget Offerings help support the ministry of more than 400 missionary

- 1 My wife Melissa with the boy who had the leg infection.
- 2 Left to right: Delores Bland, Rollin Bland, me, Melissa, and Fabiene Essono, the business manager for Adventist Health International in Chad.
- 3 Melissa and I drain pus from the chest of a young girl.

My Story, My Mission



Kayla Ewert,
Office of
Adventist
Mission

Does it seem like the church likes to talk *about* the youth a lot—but not necessarily *with* them? In my own circles, I've often heard how the youth are the future and how we need to be training them to take the gospel to the ends of the earth.

While this is true, I believe that we often overlook the fact

that young Adventists are also actively engaged in mission work *now*. Every day, young people are sharing the gospel, living out their faith, leading Bible studies, and serving as missionaries and volunteers far from home. They're passionately sharing the love of Jesus with others.

So in 2018, Adventist Mission held the "My Story, My Mission" contest, our second film contest for students. We wanted to ask young people what mission means in their daily life. What does mission look like to them? And, when given the opportunity, would Adventist

young people boldly share their mission story through film?

Student filmmakers from Honduras to Thailand and the United Kingdom to Australia sent in their short films, hoping for a chance at the grand prize: an international trip to help film a mission story with Adventist Mission producers. The 30 entrants represented nearly 20 countries. Each entry told a unique mission story and demonstrated the student's commitment to mission work at home and abroad. The youth are ready for the mission challenge. Indeed, they've already started!

MEET THE WINNERS



1ST PLACE & JUDGES' CHOICE AWARD

CALEB HAAKENSON

Union College, United States

Prize: International film trip, Ricoh Theta SC spherical camera

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

Caleb: I began watching filmmaking videos on YouTube, and then I started making videos when I was in Lebanon with my family helping refugees. Not

long after that, I served as a student missionary in Pohnpei, Micronesia, and it was very exciting to make videos of the beautiful island, landscapes, and adventure everywhere. That year was when I really got into filmmaking.

M360°: What does your film mean to you?

Caleb: I wanted to tell a story of mission and the importance it plays in how we live our lives. However, I didn't have a direct story that I felt showed everything I cared about, so I decided to take footage from my previous trips and tell some of my favorite stories from those experiences.

I loved the idea of expressing my belief that God has a plan/story for me which has started, but there's so much more to it! The same mission that God has been leading me on so far will help me understand how my own story may be completed.

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

Caleb: No matter what your story is, let God's mission for you dictate how the rest of your story will play out.

Caleb will go on his international trip later this year. To follow along on his adventure, follow Adventist Mission on social media or sign up at AdventistMission.org/filmcontest.

M360°: What attracted you to filmmaking?

Ryan: It happened gradually. When I was young, I was always interested in cartoons and humor; I even made my own comic books for a period of time. From that, my interest in film began, and I wanted to make people laugh with my own videos. I've always enjoyed telling stories, so film was something that resonated with me.

M360°: What does your film mean to you?

Ryan: I thought that if I was going to enter this contest, I had to make something different, something upbeat and slick. I guess what I learned from the experience is that, no matter how much time you have, being creative and interesting holds more value than always sticking to the regular formula.

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

Ryan: What it means to be an Adventist, which is to live like Christ.



2ND PLACE

RYAN DALY

University of East London, United Kingdom

Prize: DJI Spark drone



3RD PLACE

JACK WRIGHT

Jubilee Christian College, Australia

Prize: DJI Osmo mobile gimbal stabilizer

M360°: What attracted you to filmmaking?

Jack: My father began filmmaking seven to eight years ago. Naturally, I became curious and wanted to learn.

M360°: What does your film mean to you?

Jack: My film is an expression of gratitude to God over what I've discovered since learning that it's not about what you do; it's who you know.

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

Jack: I hope the audience of my film will realize what I did: that being a Christian is about what Jesus does through you when you become His friend.

HONORABLE MENTION

Prize: US\$25

Charles Diong, Thailand

Luis Jonathan Fernandez, Brazil

Jay Genon, Philippines

Ellen Lopes, Brazil

Samuel Vidacak, Australia



To watch the winning
"My Story, My Mission" films, go to
bit.ly/2018-AM-contest-winners.

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