

**Euro-Africa Division
First Quarter 2007**

mission
Teen



contents

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Mission Teen

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Leader's Planner

Euro-Africa Division

The Challenge

Not all of the most difficult places to work lie inside the 10/40 window. Switzerland has one Adventist for every 1,745 people, Germany has one Adventist for about every 2,300 people, and France has one Adventist for almost every 6,000 people! Modern secularism and materialism, with its indifference to religion, create a difficult environment in which to share the gospel.

Turkey, officially a secular nation, is almost entirely Muslim. Adventists number only 57, most of whom are not ethnic Turks. Officially the country has one Adventist for nearly every 1.3 million people. Clearly the challenge is great.

The Opportunities

In an effort to reach the people of Europe, our Thirteenth Sabbath Offering this quarter will help provide:

- Funds for evangelism and a new church plant in Geneva, Switzerland,
- Outreach in Turkey,
- Media center in Darmstadt, Germany.

GraceLink Connection

Service	11, 13, 17, 27
Grace	7, 9, 23, 25
Worship	5, 15, 19, 21

The Euro-Africa Division consists of countries in Europe, Africa, and the Middle East. This widely divergent territory poses great challenges to reach and win the people to Christ.

The countries receiving our attention this quarter are Germany, Switzerland, and Turkey.

Germany

Germany is one of the strongest economic and political powers in Europe, in spite of the enormous expenses it incurred in reuniting East and West Germany following the fall of Communism. The people are, for the most part, comfortable in their lifestyle, focused on material things, and disinterested in God.

In this land of Martin Luther, most people now consider religion irrelevant. Although 70 percent of the population claims to be Christian, less than half believe in a personal God, and fewer than 10 percent attend church regularly. Furthermore, studies show a growing hostility toward anything overtly Christian, especially evangelical. In this climate the 36,000 Seventh-day Adventists in Germany—one Adventist for almost every 2,300 people—struggle to share their faith or find people who will listen.

To expand the church's

impact in Germany and throughout Europe, ground has been broken to build a new modern media center, where all the church's media production can be housed under one roof. The current center works out of two crowded houses in downtown Darmstadt, providing videos, radio programs, and a large Bible correspondence school with several Bible courses to meet the needs of all sectors of the population.

Once into their new headquarters, the media center will be able to expand its services to reach outside the country into neighboring language groups that are waiting to hear the gospel of Christ. Part of our Thirteenth Sabbath Offering will help complete this new media center and increase the exposure of Germans and all Europeans to the gospel of Jesus for these days.

Switzerland

Switzerland's beautiful landscape draws thousands of tourists, while its strong economy based on banking and foreign exchange assures a comfortable life for its people. But people who are "comfortable" in their lifestyle seldom look to God for peace or happiness.

Geneva is relatively

small, with just a half million population. But it is the center of many international institutions and organizations. John Calvin and John Knox, great European Reformers, worked and preached in this city. But today most churches, whether grand cathedrals or more humble houses of worship, stand nearly empty on Sunday morning. Religion seems irrelevant to the people living here.

In spite of this, the Euro-Africa Division has focused on Geneva to plant a new church. Leaders have assigned the work of this ambitious project to youth from the Adventist seminary in nearby Collonges, France. Students and faculty representatives lead out in making friends for Christ and making a difference in the lives of people in Geneva. Part of our

Thirteenth Sabbath Offering this quarter will help fund this project and plant a new and vibrant church in Geneva.

Turkey

Turkey, the land from which the first Christian missionaries were sent, the country that houses the seven churches of Revelation, is today almost entirely Muslim. Tourists from across Europe and America visit the ruins of Smyrna and Ephesus, but few of the Turkish people living near these ruins understand the importance of the treasures at their doorstep.

Sitting at the gateway to Europe, Turkey is in a strategic location politically and economically. Istanbul, the country's largest and most famous city, actually straddles the Bosphorus, the natural canal that separates Europe

from Asia and provides access between the Mediterranean and Black seas. This strategic location makes Istanbul a prosperous and powerful city.

The Adventist Church in Turkey is tiny. We have one church building and, officially, 57 members, though a good portion of those are not Turkish and a number of Adventist "guest workers" have not changed their membership to Turkey. The challenge is huge, but progress is being made. The largest task is making Turks aware of our presence in a non-threatening manner. Plans include opening a storefront Better Living center in Istanbul to introduce people to more healthful living and to make friends for God.

Resources

The *Seventh-day Adventist Encyclopedia* (available in book form and on CD-ROM) contains more detailed information on the history of the church's work in Europe and Turkey.

The Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook (Hagerstown, Md.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 2006) contains names and addresses of virtually all Seventh-day Adventist institutions and workers around the world. Available through local Adventist Book Centers.

Recipes for an international potluck to celebrate the foods and cultures of Germany, France, Switzerland, and Turkey appear on pages 6, 8, and 10 of *Children's Mission*. Invite the children's divisions to sing some of the songs they are learning this quarter.

Embassies and tourist commissions can sometimes provide information on their country. In the United States, write to the following:

The Embassy of Germany, 4645

Reservoir Road NW, Washington, DC 20007-1998 (202-298-4000). Contact the German National Tourist Office at 800-651-7010 or visit their Web site at www.germany.info.

The Embassy of Switzerland, 2900 Cathedral Ave. NW, Washington, DC 20008 (202-745-7900) or visit the embassy's Web site at www.swissemb.org.

The Embassy of the Republic of Turkey, 2525 Massachusetts Ave. NW, Washington, DC 20008 (202-612-6700), or visit the embassy's Web site at www.turkishembassy.org.

Video/DVD: The General Conference Office of Adventist Mission has produced a DVD video highlighting stories from the Euro-Africa Division and around the world in 3, 5, and 10-minute segments suitable for Sabbath School, church, or the interim period between these services. To get a copy of the DVD, contact Adventist Mission at www.AdventistMission.org/DVD.

[AdventistMission.org/DVD](http://www.AdventistMission.org/DVD).

Thirteenth Sabbath

Remind members that the Thirteenth Sabbath Offering is a special opportunity to support world missions in general and the Euro-Africa Division in particular. On Thirteenth Sabbath, arrange to count the offering and record the total on the goal device before the end of Sabbath School if possible. This immediate feedback will encourage members to faithfully continue their mission giving.

Future Thirteenth Sabbath Projects

During second quarter the Trans-European Division will be featured. The Thirteenth Sabbath projects will help provide a church/evangelistic center for immigrants in Amsterdam, Netherlands, and a vocational training and student evangelism center at Nile Union Academy in Egypt.

Third quarter 2007 will feature projects in the West-Central Africa Division.

GraceLink Connection: Worship.

His life was centered on discos with their bright lights, loud music, and hypnotic beat until God gave him a new song.

A New Song

Nicola Taubert

As I stepped into the chilly water of the swimming pool I realized that my life as I had known it was about to end. It had taken months for this moment to arrive, and I knew that there was nowhere else I would rather be.

The Old Life

After I finished high school I decided to forget college and became a DJ in a disco instead. I spent everything I earned buying records, playing slot machines, and doing drugs. I was broke and in debt. This life was not as glamorous as I thought it would be. I knew I was on the wrong path.

In spite of the drugs and the music, I could not drown out the feeling that there was a God and I needed to learn more about Him. I remembered my mother telling me about God when I was a child. I remembered that we sometimes prayed together, but I sensed there had to be more to God and religion than just saying a prayer.

I was not ready to give up trying

to make my way on my own. But thoughts of God kept barging into my life at the strangest moments. Though I never really sought God, I could feel Him reaching out for me. Even when I was doing drugs, thoughts of God would pop into my mind. Late one night after I finished working at the disco, I went home and faced off with God. I knelt down and literally shouted at God, "If You are here, and if You are real, then help me—now. I am willing to listen to You, but I need to know You are there and You can help me."

I was in big financial trouble, and I knew I could not solve my problems myself, so I was willing to let God help me. I made a deal with God—I was willing to surrender my life to Him if He would help me. God took me up on the deal, even though I had no idea at the time what "surrender" really meant. I just knew that God heard my prayer and was going to answer it.

I did not know where to start with God. Then I remembered

that my mother had recently joined the Seventh-day Adventist Church and had sent me a book on the occult—something I was interested in. I began to read it, and there I found answers, not just to questions about the occult but also reasons that I was powerless to break free from my addictions. I entrusted my life to God, promised Him that I wanted to live according to His will *if* he would free me from the chains that bound me.

God took away my addictions to alcohol, tobacco, and gambling—all things that had chained me for years. I was free!

The Note

I felt great! I was sure that God had done this, but I did not know Him personally yet. And I did not know how to live my life for God. Then one day I received a piece of paper from a pastor that said, "I tried to contact you. Please give me a call." I laid the paper aside and did not call the number printed there right away.

A few weeks later I called the pastor, and he invited me to meet with some students for a meal and a Bible study. I was not sure about this. I wanted to sit back and watch Christians for a while and see what they were all about. But I was curious and went to the meeting. The Holy Spirit impressed me to come back for the next meeting. One evening someone invited me to the Sabbath morning worship service. I realized that this group was the same church my mother had joined.

It took awhile to get the courage to go, but one Sabbath I went to the church. The instant I opened the door, I knew that these people were my family; this was where I belonged. I know now that this was the Holy Spirit speaking to me. I no longer wanted to fight against God and spiritual things; I was *home*.

I continued attending the church, and within a month I decided to be baptized. No one had asked me about this. Again, I am sure it was the Holy Spirit who

was speaking to me. I wondered why the people told me to slow down, to take time to study the Bible and get to know God. But I knew I had finally found the path God wanted me on, and I was eager to get moving. But they were right. I slowed down, studied, grew deeper in my experience with God. Five months later I was baptized.

New Life, New Principles

Months after my baptism I began to feel uneasy about the secular music that I still enjoyed. I realized that it still controlled my life. I loved it all—pop, rock, funk, hip-hop, jazz, techno—it had been a huge part of my life for so many years. Even after I was baptized, this music was still in my bones. I asked myself how God must feel about this music and began to pray about it. I did not ask my pastor or my friends about my music; I wanted God to tell me how He felt about it. For weeks I prayed about my music. Then God answered me. One day I was listening to some music,

and suddenly I heard it as if for the first time. The music I once loved suddenly became offensive. When I listened to the words, I realized that they glorified man and Satan, not God.

God never ripped anything from me; instead, He showed me step-by-step what He wanted me to do. And as I look back over the past few years, I would not change one thing. The music? No problem; I would rather have Jesus.

I thought I would become a bricklayer, but God has revealed that He has another plan for me. I don't mind, for I have learned firsthand that His way is best. He has given me a mission to do, and I'm eager to be on with it.

You have a mission as well. As you share your faith with others, pray for those who need Jesus, and give your mission offerings, you are fulfilling the mission God has given you right now. Ask Him, and He will show you what He wants you to do. .

Nicola Taubert shares his faith in Stuttgart, Germany.

let's talk

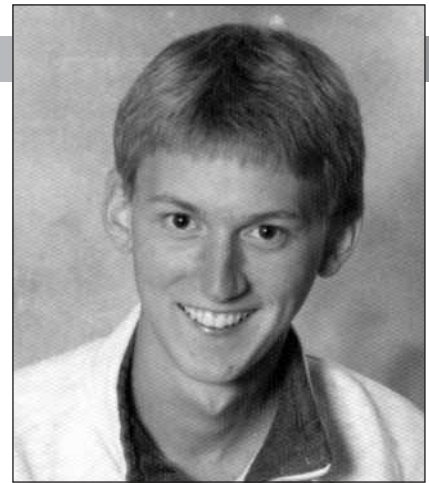
- ? Do you have anything in your life that you love but that you feel God is asking you to put aside? If you are comfortable, share what it is with the class. Would you like the class to pray for you as you make decisions about what is important in your walk with God?

PRAY pray

Pray that young people in Germany and around the world will respond to the call of Jesus as Nicola, the boy in today's story, did. Pray that God will use Nicola's experience to help other young people follow Jesus.

GraceLink Connection: Grace.

For a youthful athlete, a stumble marks the beginning of a path he had not planned to take in life.



Thorsten

Victorious in Sickness

Thorsten Kraus

[Ask a teen boy to present this first-person report.]

I was active in sports in high school. I worked hard to be the best athlete I could be. But in spite of my many hours of training, I never intended to become a professional athlete. I wanted to become a pastor like my dad. I loved studying the Bible and sharing my faith with my friends at school. At age 16 I felt the future was still a long way off.

A Big Hurdle

Then one day as I was practicing gymnastics, I sensed that my balance was off. I tried the move again, working to get my balance and movement just right. But something was wrong. I continued practicing on other equipment, and I noticed other signals that my balance was not right.

Later that day as I practiced the piano, I noticed my hand coordination was off. I was not playing my notes at exactly the right time. It was a small thing, but it bothered me. I mentioned it to my sister, who is a nurse.

She urged me to talk to Mom and Dad, and they thought I should see a doctor. I tried not to worry and told myself I would be fine in a couple days.

The doctor thought I might have a virus from a tick bite, but to be sure, he sent me to a hospital for further testing.

Devastating Diagnosis

I spent half a day undergoing tests. *All this for a tick bite?* I thought to myself. But when the results came back, the diagnosis hit me like an avalanche: I had multiple sclerosis [sklur-OH-sis], or MS. My head reeled.

The doctor told us that I had the most severe form of MS, an incurable disease that destroys the nervous system. It would affect my balance, then my coordination and motor skills would deteriorate. After some time—and he could not tell us how long—I would no longer be able to walk. *Not walk!* I thought. *I, an athlete, won't be able to walk?* Eventually, he concluded,

I would no longer be able to live without help.

The doctor's prognosis seemed like a death sentence to me. Would I never be able to study theology, become a minister, marry, or have kids?

Getting on With Life

The doctor had no idea how rapidly the disease would progress. "It could be years before other symptoms show up," he said. "So continue on with your life."

I did. I returned to high school and my studies.

However, the disease progressed much faster than the doctor thought. By graduation time I had trouble walking. My speech was not affected, and I gave the graduation speech. But I could sense the clock ticking.

Since the doctor told us that sometimes the disease stops progressing and may lie dormant for months or years, I enrolled in seminary that fall and worked toward my plan to become a minister. But the disease did not

slow its march through my body. Soon I had to use a wheelchair to get around. It became harder to hold my books or type quickly. I grew tired easily. But I kept at it.

The teachers and other students were supportive, and I was determined to complete my degree. But by the end of my third year at the university my speech had become difficult to understand, and I did not have the energy to attend classes. I realized I would not be able to finish my degree.

I went home disappointed. I could not be a pastor in the normal sense, but I could do something for Christ. I tried to encourage my friends when they needed help. I told others about my faith in God. I could still be a witness.

Steady Faith and Joy

I watched my friends graduate from college, get jobs, move into their own places, get married. I knew I would not be able to do those things. I can't walk, can't

hold a book to read, or even eat without help. God has chosen not to intervene and give me good health. But I have learned to accept this disease. I have learned to see the positive things in life, and I know that all things work together for good for those who love God (Rom. 8:28). I have learned lessons I might never have learned if I were healthy.

I study my Bible every day, and Dad and I talk about the insights we gain from our studies. I keep a prayer list and pray every day for the people on it. This is one way I can serve God.

I have never doubted that God is with me. In fact, during the most difficult times of my illness, I feel closest to Him. I depend on Him to get me through.

I am not angry or bitter about my lot in life. Even though my body has betrayed me, God has never left my side. He has given me the gift of happiness and peace in the face of illness. My relationship with God grows stronger every day.

Three Insights

I have learned three important things during my illness that I want to share. First, physical health is not the most important thing in life. Second, faith is not confirmed by physical healing. If God chooses not to heal my body, it does not mean I lack faith. It means that God has a better plan for me. And third, God can use me *in* my illness. He can use me *through* my illness to reach others for Christ. I want to do that for my Savior.

God has given me the strength I need every day to live with my illness. I am safe in His hands.

God calls you to minister to others, too. You can minister through kindness, through your words and deeds, and through the mission offerings you give faithfully. These offerings help lift the hands of others on the front lines of the battle with Satan. Please continue ministering through all these means. 。

Thorsten Kraus *lives in northern Bavaria, Germany.*

let's talk

? How did Thorsten, the young man in today's story, feel when he discovered he had MS? Did he ask God to heal him? What was God's answer? How would you feel if you discovered that you had an illness that would eventually take your health, your beauty, or your life? Would you ask God to heal you? Would you be angry with God if He chose not to heal you?

? Thorsten has found ways to share his faith in spite of his illness. What are some ways you can minister to someone who is seriously ill? *[List answers for all to see. Include spending time with the person talking, listening, reading to them; running errands or helping the person with simple tasks such as writing a letter. Most important, encourage them.]*

PRAY pray
PRAY

Pray that the young people in your class will reach out to those they know who need encouragement or physical help.

GraceLink Connection: Grace.

The car spun out of control and stopped in the road. Suddenly another car crashed into it.



Tobias

Rescued and Revived

Tobias Kazmierczak

[Ask a teen boy to present this first-person report.]

I am Tobias [toh-BEE-ahs]; I live in Germany. In May 2005 I was on top of the world. High school graduation was a few weeks away, then I would travel to the United States to study Web design for the summer before returning to Germany and starting at the university.

I slid into the driver's seat of our family car and turned the key. It was an easy drive to town, where I would pick up my passport, but the heavy rain made the roads treacherous. I rounded a curve in the road and saw a car coming toward me. The car had crossed the center line into my lane, forcing me onto the shoulder of the road to avoid hitting it. The wheels of my car caught in the loose gravel, and I fought to get the car back onto the pavement. Suddenly my car spun into the oncoming lane and stopped—right in the path of a speeding car. That was the last thing I remembered.

Hovering Near Death

I awoke in a hospital. *Where am I?* I wondered. I tried to talk, but could not. I tried to move, but my arms and legs were bound. I hurt all over. I felt groggy. A nurse standing nearby saw that I was awake and stepped to my bed. "You are in a hospital," she said softly. Then I drifted off to sleep.

When I awoke, my mother stood beside my bed. Then I saw the rest of my family standing nearby. Mother told me what had happened. "You've been in a coma for two weeks," she said. "You had terrible injuries, and we were not sure you would survive."

I learned that the impact had fractured my skull, broken my pelvis, crushed my left leg, and broke several ribs, my jaw, and cheekbone. I had lost 11 teeth. There were other serious internal injuries as well, and I had undergone surgery to repair the most vital damage.

Then the doctor told me that I would never walk again. I was devastated. I was young

and enjoyed cycling and other physical activities. As I lay in bed unable to move, I thought of the things I could no longer do. I wondered what my future would hold. However, I did not feel discouraged. I know now that this came about because my parents were praying constantly that God would give me courage to live.

A few days later another doctor examined me. I asked him if it was true that I was paralyzed. He told me that it was possible to walk again, but it all depended on me. I would have to fight for the strength to recover. His words kindled a fire inside me. I knew that I would do anything to walk again. But I had no idea how long or how difficult the road to recovery would be.

Painful Recovery

Four weeks later therapists started exercising my muscles. They started by raising the head of my bed for 30 seconds. This made me dizzy, but they told me that sitting comes before standing,

standing before walking. I was determined to walk, so I forced myself to endure the dizziness. They moved my legs and urged me to think about the muscles that were working. After several days I could *feel* that they were moving my leg, but I still could not make my leg move on my own. Little by little I could sit up in bed, and then they began working on helping me stand with full support.

Five weeks after the accident I had terrible cramps in my intestines. Doctors had to operate to save my life, but because I had lost so much weight—about a third of my body weight—this surgery was more dangerous than the surgery I had when I first came into the hospital. My family and the elders of the church prayed outside the operating room during my surgery.

The surgery went well, but recovery slowed my therapy. The next week I started therapy again. The therapists helped me out of bed, and with a therapist on each side holding me up, I was able to move my legs as if I were walking. Though I could not put weight on my legs yet, I saw progress, and I felt a surge of hope. Little by little I was allowed

to put weight on my legs.

Eight weeks after the accident I was moved to a rehabilitation center, where I would work hard to regain movement. I had lost so much muscle that the nerves in my legs could not send messages to the muscles properly. Thus I still did not know whether I would ever walk again.

In addition to two sessions a day of intense therapy on my legs and back, I had to relearn a lot, such as words and math skills, that I had lost in the accident. I had not lost it all, but I had to reconnect what I knew with the language to express it. But all this therapy still took only a part of my day. The rest of my day I spent in isolation because an open wound on my arm had become infected. I could not visit other patients or spend time with my family or friends. It bothered me, and I was bored of just reading and being alone. I told my mother that I was eager to go home.

Home at Last

The doctors agreed to let me go home as long as someone could treat my wound and make sure I saw the doctors regularly. My therapy would continue at home. I was so happy! At last I

was going home!

It took a lot of time, but finally I was able to walk again by myself. What a wonderful day when I took my first steps without help!

I redid my last year of high school so I could be sure I was learning normally and could take my university exams.

Moving On

I have changed since the accident. Although I can walk now, I have far to go to regain my health and mobility. But I am growing stronger physically, emotionally, and mentally, and my faith is growing stronger as well. I am learning to trust God with my life, for He has been my strength and my salvation.

My accident and my recovery have had a big effect on people. My doctor told me, "Tobias, it was not the expertise of the doctors that saved your life; it is clearly a miracle. Most people with such serious injuries do not fully recover." I know that I am a walking, talking miracle.

God has given me back my life. I want to use it for His honor. ۞

Tobias Kazmierczak *lives in Darmstadt, Germany.*

Let's talk

? Why does God allow bad things to happen to good people? *[Help class members to understand that God does not make bad things happen, but He allows us to suffer in order to strengthen our faith and bring honor to Him. When we have faith in God, He can turn even the worst situation into something good.]*

PRAY pray PRAY

Pray that Tobias will continue to grow stronger and that his experience will help others to find faith in God.

GraceLink Connection: Service.

She traveled to Europe for adventure, but God led her on a life-changing journey.



Patricia

Adventure With God

Patricia Miranda

[Ask two young people to present the following interview with a young student in France.]

Reporter: Good morning. This is your on-the-street mission reporter. Today I am speaking with Patricia Miranda [mee-RAHN-dah], a student at the Adventist college in France.

Patricia, I understand that you have had quite an adventurous life so far. Tell us about it.

Patricia: I grew up in Brazil, but when I was 17, I went to the United States to study in an American high school. I liked it so much that I decided to continue my studies in an Adventist college there. Unfortunately, after two years I realized that I could not earn enough money to pay my tuition and fees. I had to return to Brazil.

Reporter: What happened then?

Patricia: It was a difficult time in my life. I discovered that I could not continue my college studies in Brazil. I would have to start over. I was stuck. My Brazilian friends were away studying or working.

I was lonely and discouraged. I thought God didn't care.

Reporter: What changed your mind?

Patricia: A friend invited me to go to France with her and study. I didn't go with her, but I decided to study French in France. I needed money for that, so I arranged to go to France and work as an au pair (*oh-pear*), a nanny.

I had not prayed in a long time, but as I searched for the right family, I started praying again. I needed God's guidance. He led me to a great family.

Reporter: How did that work out?

Patricia: It was hard, but soon I could speak enough French to get along. After a few months I was quite comfortable speaking French.

Reporter: Something happened in France that changed your life. Tell us about it.

Patricia: First I learned that I could study at a state university free of charge right in the city where I was living. I decided to do this. Then I learned about a nationwide youth congress. I went to it, and that is where God changed my life.

The theme was using our time for God, letting God call us, and responding, "Here am I." One of the sessions was led by some students from the Adventist seminary in France. They talked about a church planting program in Geneva, one of the most secular cities in Europe. The program reaches out to the secular young adults and college students of Geneva in new and interesting ways and inviting them to consider letting God into their lives.

As the speakers took turns, I thought about my own life and how God led me when I allowed Him to. I'd worked in Adventist summer camps and met a lot of people who seemed to have no purpose in life. I thought of my childhood friend, whom I had

invited to church so often over the years, but she never came. The young people working in LeLab were inviting other young people to make God a part of their lives, but they were doing it outside of a church building and in ways that would attract people who had never given God much thought. I liked that idea.

I signed up for LeLab, and two months later I learned that I had been accepted. Enrolling in the program would allow me to study theology for free at the same time. This was a great opportunity. I decided this was too good to pass up, so I dropped my plans to study French in the university.

Reporter: How has LeLab changed people's lives?

Patricia: Lots of young people who had never been inside a church are attending the LeLab programs on Wednesday nights. There they are exposed to God in various ways. One program

allowed them to see God through the lives of Bible characters who interacted with Jesus.

One young woman brought her secular boyfriend to LeLab. She had left her father's church and God. But after a series of programs, she renewed her relationship with God. Her boyfriend has now heard the story of Jesus for the first time. More than 200 people have come to LeLab and learned something about God. Great things are happening.

Reporter: How has LeLab changed *your* life?

Patricia: I have met many secular students I might never have met. For instance, I often did my Greek assignments in a local coffee shop. One day I sat down in an empty seat across from a guy who spoke Spanish. He saw I had a religion book and asked me, "Does your church reject sinners?" I answered that

God loves everyone, no matter their sin. He started telling me a lot about his own life—things I would never have known if I hadn't been willing to talk without judging.

Reporter: What closing words do you have for us, Patricia?

Patricia: God wants us to meet people where they are, to be friendly and listen without judging them. This is the only way we can reach those who would never go to church. Whether it's in our school classroom, on the street, or in our homes, we must be willing to listen as God would listen, and invite the people to meet Jesus when they are ready.

Reporter: Thank you. This is your mission reporter signing off for today. Happy Sabbath.

Patricia Miranda is studying theology at the Adventist university in Collonges, France.

let's talk

- ? Patricia felt discouraged and abandoned when she learned that she could not attend school in Brazil. How did God bring good out of this "bad" situation? Have you ever felt that God has abandoned you? Share your thoughts with the class.
- ? Patricia realized that God was leading her when she heard the LeLab presentation at the youth retreat. How has God led you to share His love with someone?
- ? LeLab invites young people to a meeting outside a church. Why do you think this alternate worship service works better with people who don't know God? What are some things your Sabbath School and church family could do to reach secular people?

PRAY pray PRAY

Pray for Patricia and the other students involved in LeLab as they spend time sharing the story of Jesus with others. Pray for those who are hearing about Jesus for the first time. Ask God to send His Spirit to break down the walls they have built around their hearts and lives.

GraceLink Connection: Service.

It's not important to know why God wants us to do something. The important thing is to step out in faith and do it.



Camille

Letting My Light Shine

Camille Clark

[Ask a girl to present this first-person report.]

My name is Camille, and I want to tell you how great it is to be a light bearer for Jesus. Since I was little, I've always wanted God to use me to share His love with others. And God has taken me at my word. Sometimes I did not understand what God was doing in my life, but I knew He had plans for me.

When I as younger I loved talking with people about God and giving them little tracts if they were interested. No one made me do this; I just wanted to. I enjoyed it.

In my first year in college I signed up to major in biology. I did not know why I had chosen biology until several months later, when I signed up to go on a mission trip with youth from my home church over Christmas vacation.

Our mission team went to Nairobi, Kenya, where we held a youth evangelistic series in the city. It was so exciting to see people accept Jesus as

their Savior and follow Him in baptism while we were there. We also worked at an orphanage, where we made friends with the children while we worked to fix up the home in which they lived. It was amazing to connect with people whose lives were so different from my own!

Exciting Discovery

One day soon after I returned to school, I walked past a table in the hall. The table was piled with books, and a sign said they were free for taking. I love books, so I stopped and browsed through some of them. I found several books that looked really interesting, so I took them to my room. One book was *Medical Missionary*, by Ellen G. White. I started reading it and grew really excited. "So this is why You impressed me to major in biology, isn't it, God?" I exclaimed. I continued reading, and within a few days I became convinced that

God was calling me to be a doctor.

I thought about the mission trips and the times when I shared my faith with friends, neighbors, or even strangers. I was always happiest when I was doing something for God. I realized that at last I had found my life goal.

I became involved in more outreach activities at school and took a course called Steps to Discipleship. I found new ministries, such as working with children who lived in poverty in a city near the campus where I studied. My friends and I played with the children and became their friends. We organized a children's Bible club for them and had a great time teaching them songs and telling stories that would remind them that Jesus is their friend.

Change of Course

At the end of my freshman year I was accepted into a summer research program at Loma Linda

University. While there, I sensed that God was leading me to change schools. I was not sure why, because I had been so happy my first year in college. But I obeyed and contacted Oakwood College about enrolling. It would be interesting to see what new things God had planned for me.

I joined a group called NAPS, a group that ministers in many ways in the community and beyond. I found soul mates in this group, people who were as mission-minded as I was. We fed the homeless, helped clean up after a major hurricane, visited juvenile detention centers, worked at area food banks, and took part in many other projects that presented themselves to us. Seeing the look of gratitude on the faces of the people we were helping was like seeing the face of Jesus everywhere. My first year at Oakwood flew by in a happy blur. But I felt a growing desire to study French.

Study in France

I had studied French in high school, but I wanted to learn

more. I wanted to study intensive French at the Adventist college in France. My parents wondered how this would further my career plans. I could not answer them, but I explained I felt God leading. They agreed to allow me to go.

I had planned to go on another mission trip during Christmas break, but I was having problems getting my student visa for France. I prayed a lot, and my passport and visa arrived just a day before our team was supposed to leave for the mission trip to South America.

The trip was another wonderful blessing as we worked beside locals, encouraging them, sharing our faith with them, and seeing lives changed. Three days after I arrived home from Guyana, I flew to France to start my studies. Although my French studies keep me busy, I've joined a small group Bible study with several others on campus. There I met some people whose lives have blessed me so much.

Ministry of Encouragement

We share the dormitory with

high school students who study on campus too. Since they are younger than I am, I try to befriend them and encourage them whenever I can. It's another way to share God's love with others.

Soon my semester of studying French will be over. Then I will return to college for my last year of premed studies before I enter medical school.

What will the future hold for me? I don't know exactly, but I do know that I can trust God to lead me. God has told us to seek first His kingdom, and all these wonderful things will be added to us. I can say from experience that if you decide in your heart to serve the Lord, He will work things out to prepare you for that. It may not be easy, but trust God to handle the details. He makes everything possible.

We don't have to do something grand for God. All He asks is that we do what He asks us to do. That way we can let our lights shine for Him.

Camille Clark is studying at Oakwood College in the United States.

Let's talk

? Name some ways Camille let her light shine for God? How can you let your light shine for God?

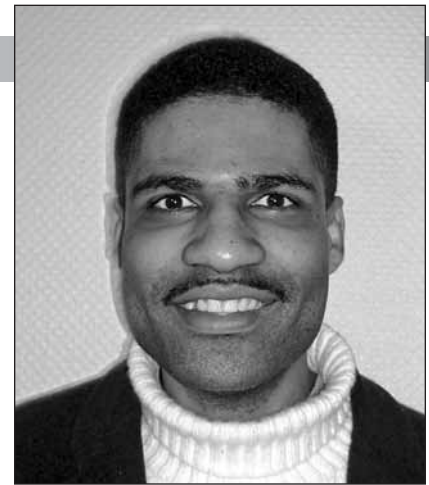
? Camille did not know why God led her to major in biology until months later. What events helped her understand her major? How has God led in your life? Did you understand everything He led you to do at the time? What did you learn from obeying without understanding? *[If we let God lead, He will teach us to trust Him.]*

PRAY pray PRAY

Pray that each class member will allow God to lead in their lives. Pray that they will have the courage to speak out for God and let their light of faith shine brightly where others can see.

GraceLink Connection: Worship.

The national exam was scheduled for Sabbath and could not be changed. His family encouraged him to trust, but Fabrice wondered what God could do.



Fabrice

The Impossible Exam

Fabrice Marie-Anne

[Ask a teen boy or young man to present this first-person report.]

I grew up in Martinique [mar-tin-EEK], a small French island in the Caribbean Sea. I went to France to study X-ray technology and realized how different the people of Martinique are from the people of France. France is a secular country in which religion does not play a big part in the lives of people. The government makes little effort to accommodate people's religious preferences or needs.

The Sabbath Exam

In spite of this, none of my classes fell on Sabbath, so I had no real problems during my studies. But everything changed when it came time to take my final exams. The written exams were scheduled during the week, but the practical part of one exam was scheduled for Sabbath, when the hospitals where we had to take the exam were less busy.

I petitioned to take the exam on a different date, but my school's director told me that this exam is a national exam, and students from all over France take the

exam the same day. He could not change the exam date. And he warned me that if I did not take the practical exam, I would fail the entire course.

I went to the government office of education to petition the education director. I asked the woman there how I could reschedule the exam. "Are you sick?" she asked me. "If you are sick, I can change the exam date for you."

"No," I told her, "I am not sick. I am a Seventh-day Adventist, and I worship on Saturday, God's Sabbath. I wish to take the exam on another day."

"I cannot do that," she said. "Some Jewish students are taking the exam on Saturday, so you can too. Just take the exam and ask your priest or pastor to forgive you."

"I cannot do that," I told her. "Taking the exam on Sabbath is not a sin against the pastor or the church; it is a sin against God."

"Then I can do nothing to help you," she said. "Go and work the problem out with your school director."

What to Do?

I wrestled with my problem. How was I going to pass the course without this exam? *I must find a way. Should I tell the director I am sick?* I wondered. *No, that would be a lie.*

I went to the hospital where the practical part of the exam was to be held. I asked the medical director if there was a way she could work it out so I could take the exam on another day. She said she could not help me, for Saturday was the only day that the radiology lab was available for these exams.

I prayed about the problem; I called my mother and asked her to pray as well. "God is able to work it out," she encouraged. "Instead of going to the exam, choose God, choose to go to church, and let God work the problem out." I was strengthened by her strength, but still I was discouraged. My father also urged me to "choose God."

I studied hard and did well on all the exams I took during exam week. But on Sabbath I went to

church. It was hard not to think of the exam that my classmates were taking while I was in church, so I shared my situation with my friends. We spent time praying about the outcome. I felt better when I returned home.

Surprising News

While I waited for the results of my tests, I prayed every day that somehow God would help me to pass the course without the practical exam. "You can give me success if You choose to, Lord. It is up to You," I told Him whenever my stomach tied up in knots with worry.

On the appointed day I went to the school to receive my grades. I did not expect to find my name on the list of those who passed, but I searched the list anyway. To my surprise—no, to my shock—my name was there. I had passed! I was so amazed!

Some of my classmates knew of my situation; they knew that I

was determined to remain faithful to my convictions and not take the exam. They also knew that I could not pass the course without that critical exam. So they were as shocked as I was to find my name listed among those who had passed.

"How did you do it?" they asked me. "Did you take the exam after all?"

"No," I told them. "God chose to honor my faith and keep the Sabbath day holy."

Try as they could, my classmates could not understand. "Maybe the exam committee decided to do you a favor and let you skip this exam," they said. I explained that the committee did not give me a favor; it was God who worked it out.

I wanted to tell my school director that I had passed the exams, but I wondered if that would cause problems. I knew he did not believe in God, and I wondered if he would understand

what I was trying to tell him. I prayed about it and felt that God was encouraging me to go and tell this man who did not believe in God what God had done for me when I asked Him.

"How can this be?" he asked, surprised. "This is impossible. Just impossible," he said. I wondered if he might recheck my results and find that there had been a mistake, and I would lose the passing mark. But instead of making trouble, he told me, "It was courageous of you to stand up for your faith and your God. I respect your religion and your God. I am happy you have passed." I walked out of the director's office still amazed that God had given me success. "You are so wonderful, God," I whispered. I love to tell others about the wonderful works God has done in my life! ˆ

Fabrice Marie-Anne has returned to Martinique to work as an X-ray technician.

let's talk

? Fabrice (fah-BREES) had to choose whether to keep the Sabbath or take the test. What kind of excuses might he have made in order to avoid taking the exam on Sabbath? Why did he not use any of these excuses?

? Fabrice made a conscious decision to *choose to honor God* and let God take care of the results. What did Fabrice decide to do the Sabbath he was to take the exam? How did God honor Fabrice's decision?

? Fabrice and his classmates were all surprised to find that Fabrice had passed the exam. They said it was impossible to pass. How did he respond?

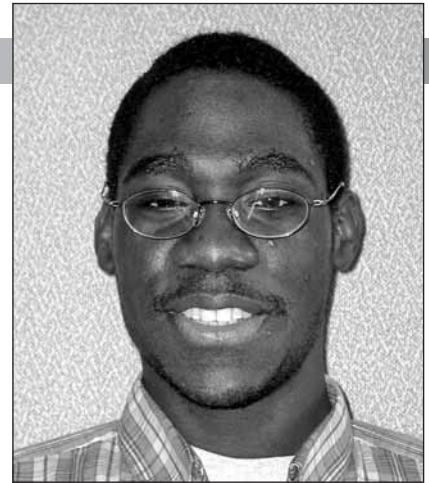
? Fabrice did not have to go to his director and share the exam results with him. Why did he go? What were the results of this visit? [Fabrice risked his passing grade by going to see the director, who could have opened an investigation into his unexplained success. Fabrice testified of God's powerful working in his life and could testify that God exists and is faithful to those who honor Him.]

PRAY pray
PRAY

Pray that young people in France—and in your class—will be faithful to God in times of trial so that others can see that it is good to follow God's path.

GraceLink Connection: Service.

Far from home and family, this teen decided that God would still be the center of his life.



Emmanuel

When Temptations Assail

Emmanuel Louri

[Ask a boy to present this first-person report.]

I live in Paris, France, where I am a student. But I grew up on the island of Martinique [mar-tin-EEK] in the Caribbean. I attended Adventist schools, so I did not face the Sabbath problems that some of my friends faced in public school. And because Sabbath problems did not affect me then, I did not think much about it. But then I had to go to France to complete my studies, and in France keeping the Sabbath can pose serious problems.

I moved to France alone, for my family could not join me. It was scary and exciting at the same time. Being away from my family put a lot of pressure on me. I had always lived in a sheltered Adventist home. In France, discos parties, and cinemas could have distracted me, but I asked God to help me stay faithful to Him.

New School, New Challenges

I enrolled in a school that would prepare me for my college studies. I realized that it was just a matter of time before I would have

to take a stand for the Sabbath, but I did not realize how soon that day would come. On the first day of classes the teacher distributed a class schedule. I had no classes on Sabbath, but chapter exams were scheduled for Sabbath.

I explained to the school director that I am a Seventh-day Adventist Christian and I worship on Sabbath. I asked permission to take my exams another time. But he said no. "You have two choices," he told me. "You can take the exams on Saturday or you can leave the school now."

The Jewish students who were enrolled in the same school chose to take the exams on Saturday, and their decision made it more difficult for those of us who wanted to be true to our faith.

I prayed about the situation and decided to stay at the school until the director forced me to leave. Two weeks later I went back to see the director. This time his tone was different. He said that I could skip the Saturday exams and take a chance that I would pass the final exam at the end of the year.

"I will be honest with you," he said. "It will be difficult to pass the final exam if you have not taken the chapter exams, but it is up to you." I accepted the offer and put everything into God's hands. It was not an easy choice, but I knew that if I was faithful to God, He would be faithful to me.

"Are You Crazy?"

When my teachers and classmates learned about my decision, some said I was crazy and tried to talk me out of it. On Friday afternoon the other students saw me pack up my books and asked where I was going. I told them about the Sabbath. Even the Jewish students, who knew about the Sabbath, wondered why I was risking failure to keep the Sabbath.

On Saturday night and Sunday I reviewed the material that we covered during the week and went over the exam that a classmate always picked up for me. I completed the entire exam, even though I knew I could not turn it in. It helped me know what

kinds of questions would be on the final test.

I tried to live a consistent Christian life in front of my classmates and teachers. I often read my Bible during lunch, and this always prompted questions. I would tell them that I was having dessert and reading the book of Proverbs. Some listened with interest as I read some proverbs to them. And some would ask questions about the Bible. I was able to give some of them books and magazines to read.

Months passed, and the final exam drew near. I had no idea whether I would pass the test since I had not taken the weekly tests. But I studied hard and was determined to do my best. The rest was in God's hands.

When the final exam results were announced, I learned I had passed with a high grade and could enroll in my chosen school. The director of my school called me and congratulated

me on doing so well. He even invited me to talk with some new students about what to expect. It was an honor to speak to the students and represent Christ before them.

An Opportunity to Witness

My Sabbath problems did not end when I entered the school of radiology. However, even though exams were scheduled on Sabbath, the director of this school was more understanding. She arranged for me to take my exams another day.

My teachers and classmates know that I am a Seventh-day Adventist Christian. We get together outside of class to study and talk, and I am able to share my ideas about God with them. They know I do not allow smoking, drinking, or drugs in my place, and they respect that. I cook vegetarian food for them, and they always come back for more. And when I visit their

homes, they try to have something vegetarian for me to eat.

We get along quite well, and God has given me many opportunities to share my faith. When they ask me why I don't eat meat, I tell them that my body is the temple of God and I want to treat my temple with respect. They have seen I can be a Christian and have a fun life.

When I arrived in France, I could have chosen to do things that my parents and God would not approve of. But I'm glad that I chose to be true to God, to live so others could see Jesus in me. I often wonder what if I had chosen to be like everybody else and take my exams on Sabbath. How would that have affected my witnessing opportunities with my teachers and friends? I thank God that He continues to introduce me to new people to whom I can witness about His love for them. ۞

Emmanuel Louri *lives in Paris, France.*

Let's talk

? Emmanuel didn't have Sabbath problems until he went to France. Do you think that his background made it easier or harder for him to make decisions about Sabbathkeeping?

? When the director of the school told him that he could take exams on Sabbath or leave the school, Emmanuel chose another option. What was it? *[to stay at the school and risk being expelled.]* How did his response influence the school director? *[The director agreed to let him miss the Sabbath exams.]* How would you have responded if you had been in Emmanuel's situation? Why?

? How did Emmanuel's decision to stay close to God influence his teachers and fellow students? What opportunities did it give him?

? Emmanuel wondered what would have happened to his opportunity to share his faith if he had forsaken the Sabbath and taken his exams. What do you think would have happened?

PRAY pray
PRAY

Pray that Adventist students who are facing Sabbath problems at school will know that God loves them and wants the best for them. Ask God to help you be faithful like Emmanuel was in his time of trial.

GraceLink Connection: Worship.

A young student from a faraway land has nothing but faith and God to see her through. Will God do it?



Grace

Ask and Let God Work

Grace Aruna Cartan

[Ask a teenage girl or young woman to present this first-person report.]

I grew up in the island country of Mauritius in the Indian Ocean. *[Locate Mauritius, an island east of Madagascar, off the eastern coast of Africa.]* When I finished high school, I wanted to study in France, but my mother could not afford to help me. I told her that I felt God wanted me to study in France, and I had faith that if I trusted God He would provide. Finally Mother agreed to let me go, and we prayed that God would provide for my needs.

Stepping Out With God

I arrived in France a month before school started so I could look for a place to live. I would stay with my aunt, who lives in France, while I looked for a more convenient place to live.

A friend from home was in France at the same time. She invited me to visit her aunt in Paris, for she was sure her aunt could help me find a place to live. We had a great visit with my friend's aunt, and right off she said, "I hear you are looking for

a place to live. Let's pray about this right now, shall we?" And we did. My friend's aunt is not an Adventist, but she's certainly a consecrated Christian!

After we prayed, my friend's aunt told me that her employer rents rooms to students and offered to introduce me to this woman. I was so impressed how God was using people I did not even know to help me get settled in a strange country!

More Than I Asked

My friend's aunt introduced me to her employer, and before our first visit ended, this woman offered to let me live in one of her rooms. No, not one room, two rooms. And when I asked her how much I should pay for the rent, she would not let me pay anything. "You are a student, and money does not come easily," she said. She is not even charging for electricity! Even more, she told me that I can remain in her home as long as I am studying in Paris! God certainly has given me far more

than I asked of Him! My biggest worry about coming to France to study was how I would pay my expenses. I should not have worried about it, because I asked God to provide, and He has!

After I found housing, my thoughts turned to a job. Friends back home who had studied abroad told me that I would need to find work to pay for my expenses. I knew my mother would not be able to help me, so I asked God to help me find a job that would allow me to pay my own way to school. Before long, God had given me a job!

God's Little Surprises

Working and studying are tiring. Sometimes I come home from school late and too tired to fix food. Often I enter my apartment and find that someone has brought food already prepared. It reminds me of a phrase in Psalm 23, "a table [set] before me" (verse 5).

And people have given me clothes, too—so many clothes!

My friend's aunt works at my employer's home. Sometimes she brings me food and clothes. Others I don't even know have brought me things. God has provided so much beyond anything that I could have asked. I'm glad that I have faith and no money. Then I can be the recipient of God's abundant blessings.

I love to share what God has given me—my faith, my food, and my clothes. Anything I can do for God, give back to God, or give to others in God's name, is wonderful.

I still have a lot to learn to adapt to life in France. People here are nice, but they are not so warm and friendly to strangers as they are back home. But I am learning that we do not have to be like the people with whom we live. We can be—we *must* be—different. God says we must come out of Babylon if we are to be His people.

Church Home

After I found a place to live and a job, I started looking for a church home. I had attended the largest Adventist church in Paris, and it was nice, but I did not feel that it was right for me. Then one Sabbath morning I woke up and felt that I should try a different church. God led me to a little congregation made up almost entirely of foreign-born Adventists. As I walked in, I sensed that this was where God wanted me. The people welcomed me and made me feel like I was part of their family. God is stretching my faith while teaching me that I need nothing but Him.

France is a lovely country, a rich country. People here are comfortable and satisfied. Most of them feel that they do not need God. They do not practice their religion or stretch their faith. They do not reach out to others. I met a girl from the Caribbean who

was surprised to learn that I am an Adventist. "Why is it that everyone I meet seems to be an Adventist?" she asked. "I am not an Adventist, but it seems that all of my friends back home and the few people I have met in Paris are Adventists."

I told her that it's not a coincidence that she meets Adventist people, because Adventists are loving and friendly. I invited her to come to church with me, for the church is close to her home. I know she will like it, because the church members are loving and friendly, and she is a student far from home and homesick for her family, as I am. I want to show her what God is like and that He loves her no matter where she is from. That's another thing I am asking God for—to make me enough like Him that my new friend will see Jesus in my life. I think He will do that. ˆ

Grace Aruna Cartan is studying in Paris, France.

Let's talk

? List some of the challenges Grace has faced and God has provided in her journey to another land to study. [*Transportation to France, a place to live, a job, unexpected gifts of food and clothes, and a church family who loves her.*] Why has Grace received these blessings? [*Because she asked God for them.*]

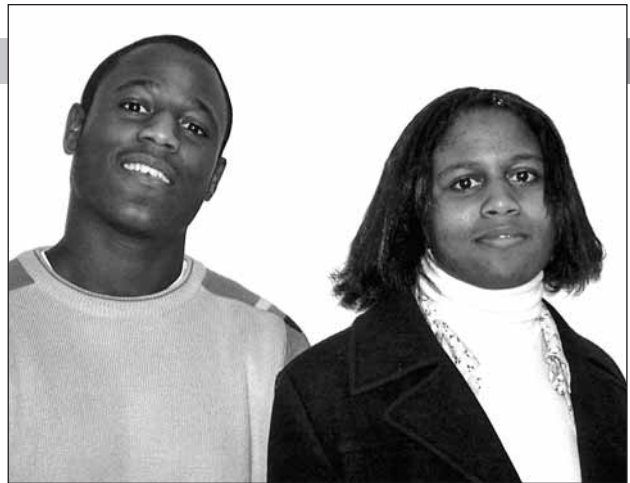
? List some Bible texts that assure us that God wants us to ask for things we need (not things we just want) and promises to supply those needs. [*Challenge students to use a concordance to find texts that they remember but cannot find. If they cannot think of any texts to look up, suggest they look up some of the following: Matthew 6:8; Matthew 7:7 (or Luke 11:9); Matthew 7:9-11 (or Luke 11:11-13); Matthew 18:19; Matthew 21:22 (or James 1:5, 6); John 14:13, 14; John 15:7, 16; 16:23, 24; Ephesians 3:20; James 4:2, 3; 1 John 5:14, 15.*]

PRAY pray

Make a list of some definite needs in your Sabbath School and/or church. Pray in faith for these needs according to the Bible verses you have just studied.

GraceLink Connection: Worship.

In France it takes prayer, persistence, a good reputation, and God's grace to deal with Sabbath problems in school.



Patrick and Ketty

Faithful in the Face of Trials

Patrick and Ketty Lange

[Ask a teen boy and girl to present these first-person reports.]

Ketty

My name is Ketty, and I live in Paris, France. I have faced many trials in public school, but I have seen God's hand in my life.

In France high school students who have finished their course work must take a special test called A-level exams. Last year one of my A-level exams was scheduled for Sabbath. I asked the teacher to let me take the exam on a different day. The teacher asked me why, and I told her about my religion. She told me to ask my pastor for permission to miss church this once so I could take the test. I explained that it was God's law, not my pastor's decision to make. I was not willing to break God's law to take a test.

Finally my teacher agreed to talk with the other teachers about my request. I went home and prayed that God would overrule, but I wondered what my teacher could do. When she saw me later that week, she said, "Some of the teachers think you should

be allowed to take the exam on a day other than your Sabbath." Then what she said next nearly knocked me over. "We've decided to give you the test on Friday. Don't open it or read it until your Sabbath is over. Then you stay in your home and take the test. Seal it in this envelope and return it to me on Monday."

Later I learned that my French teacher had told the other teachers that she had let me take tests at home over the weekend and she knew I was trustworthy and would not cheat. I was deeply moved by this teacher's confidence, and I thanked God for helping me stand firm.

Patrick

I am Patrick. Ketty is my sister. I knew that Ketty took some exams at home on Sunday. I saw how she prayed about her tests and how God worked things out for her. So I was not worried about what would happen to me when I began having Sabbath conflicts.

One Monday the teacher told us that we would have a French exam on Saturday. I went to her after class and told her that I could not take the exam on Saturday. I explained that I was a Seventh-day Adventist. But instead of making arrangements for me to take the test at home or do it later, the teacher told me I had to take my request to the director of education. I had prayed about the exam and asked my sisters to pray, but was not worried about it. In fact, I completely forgot that I needed to go see this man. I guess I thought that praying would be enough.

On Thursday I remembered to go see the director of education about the Sabbath test. He knew my sister and knew that her teachers had let her take her tests at home. But he was not sure this was a good thing.

"Why don't you go ask your priest or pastor to give you permission to miss church on Saturday so you can take the

exam?" he suggested. I told him that my pastor had nothing to do with it; it was between God and me. I left his office without the permission I needed to miss the exam or to take it at a different time. In fact, he warned me that if I missed the exam I could be expelled from school.

That afternoon the director's words rattled in my head, and I could not concentrate on my schoolwork. I decided to see my French teacher after class and try to arrange something with her.

"Is there a way I can take this exam at home?" I asked. "I really cannot take this test on Saturday." To my surprise, my teacher agreed. "But," she said, "you still have to get permission from the director of education to take the exam at home." Great! I still had to convince the director of education.

I did not want to go back to the director of education, for I was sure he would refuse. Besides, we had prayed, and I was sure that God would work this out. Maybe

my French teacher would go see the director herself. I learned later that the teacher did go, but the director refused to give her permission to let me take the test at home.

By Friday morning I was getting discouraged, but I was not ready to give up. Then one of the teachers told Ketty that another student had also made the same request, and the staff had decided to let all of us take the exam at home.

On Sunday morning I prayed and read the Bible. Then I picked up the envelope containing the exam and opened it. The exam asked me to write an essay on laziness. How glad I was that I had taken time to read my Bible that morning, for God had pointed me to just the verse I needed to read: Proverbs 6:6, which says, "Go to the ant, you sluggard; consider its ways and be wise!" (NIV). I wanted to open my Bible and quote the verse in my essay, but I felt that would be cheating. So I prayed, and

the words came to my mind. I finished the exam and placed it in the envelope.

On Monday I gave my exam to the teacher. She asked me if I had respected the rules and the time allowance for the exam. I felt good that I could tell her I had not cheated.

Two weeks later my teacher gave us back our tests. I was shaking, fearful that I had not done well. But to my surprise, I had received one of the best grades in the class!

I was glad for several things. First, Ketty had been a faithful Christian and had won the respect of teachers at the school. Second, I was glad that God had helped me to do well on the exam and not cheat. But most of all, I am glad that God had shown me that He will be with me always, no matter what trials I must face in the future. 3

Patrick and Ketty Lange live in Paris, France.

Let's talk

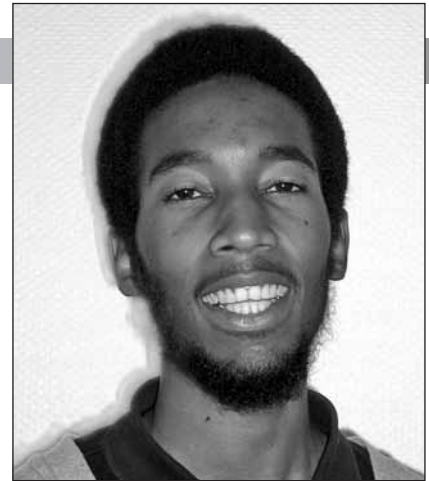
- ? Have you had to ask for Sabbath privileges at school or work?
 - What did this story tell you that might help you deal with a problem arising because of Sabbath observance in the future?
- ? Why is it important to keep the Sabbath as a special day, set aside for God? What might happen when we begin letting
 - worldly things creep into our Sabbath time? [Encourage the class to list some things that might tempt them to forget about the Sabbath.] What does God say about the importance of keeping the Sabbath?

PRAY pray
PRAY

Pray that the Sabbath will become or remain a special time set aside to be with God. Pray that we will sense the sacredness of this time and use it wisely.

GraceLink Connection: Grace.

*He knew he should get up and do his chores,
but he felt powerless to move.*



Emmanuel

The Day I Met God

Emmanuel Geran

[Ask a boy to present this first-person report.]

I grew up in an Adventist family, but my parents had some problems and eventually divorced when I was a teen. Mother had to work and asked me to take care of the house when I was home. But I wanted to watch TV rather than clean the house or wash the clothes.

I got home from school early on Wednesday afternoon, but instead of cleaning the house, I would watch TV. I felt guilty because I knew I was letting my mother down, and even more, I was letting God down.

An Encounter With God

One day I was watching TV, and something told me to turn it off. I turned off the TV and sat on the couch in the now-quiet room. I saw the dirty dishes in the sink and the dirty floors, but I had no strength to get up and clean. It was like Paul said in Romans 7:15, "I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do" (NIV). Then I remembered my mother

telling me that I must ask God to forgive my sins.

Thoroughly unhappy with myself over my laziness and disobedience, I went into my room to ask God to forgive my sins. But I did not feel very sincere. No particular sin came to my mind, so I asked God to make this day different from other days, a day when I could be right with God and with my mom. But after I prayed I still felt no different, no change in my body.

I picked up my Bible and opened it to Ezekiel 36 and started reading. When I read verses 26 and 27, I knew the words were straight from God. I read, "I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit in you and move you to follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws" (NIV).

I prayed again, asking God to remind me of my sins that I had not confessed. As I recalled a sin I

asked God to forgive me. I recalled my laziness and disobedience in not cleaning the house and asked God to forgive me. The more I prayed for God to reveal my sins, the more He revealed.

I felt tears on my cheeks. More than anything I wanted to start a new page in my life. I wanted things to be different with God and with my mom. I did not like the person I had become, and I wanted to become more like Jesus. I could feel the difference in my attitude just since I had started praying. At first I had not been serious, but the longer I prayed, the more sincere I became. By the time I finished praying I was earnestly wanting every sin confessed, every sin forgiven. I asked God to remind me of sins committed longer and longer ago. Finally, the sins came too fast for me to confess them. I felt as if I were drowning, and I shouted, "God, forgive me! Forgive me for every sin, even the sins I cannot remember! Save me!"

A Long-ago Sin

I remembered a time when my brother had done something bad to me when I was 7 years old. I recalled thinking that when I was older I would get my revenge. Since that day my attitude toward my brother had been vengeful. God told me to go to my brother and confess the hatred and revenge I had harbored all these years. I asked God to forgive me for that hatred and promised to confess this to my brother as soon as he came home that evening. Then I asked God to assure me that He had forgiven me.

I was still kneeling down when I heard a voice clearly tell me, "Your sins have been forgiven." At that moment I felt peace and joy flood over me. The heavy burden that had weighed me down earlier was entirely gone. I knew that God is real, that He had forgiven me, and that I belong to Him. I got up

to leave my room, then I stopped again and thanked God for His wonderful gift of forgiveness.

Surprise for Mom

I was eager to tell my mom what had happened, that I was clean now. Then I remembered the jobs my mom had given me to do. With renewed energy, I went to the kitchen to wash the dishes.

When my mom and brother came in, I hugged both of them. They did not understand what had happened, but they saw the difference in me. And Mom was pleased that the work was done.

On Friday I came home from school, and no one was home. My mother usually was home on Fridays, but that day she had been gone all day. I put my schoolbooks down, but instead of turning on the TV as I had in the past, I started cleaning the house. I made the beds—even my

mother's bed—cooked something for Sabbath dinner, and ironed my Sabbath clothes. I even ironed my brothers' clothes, all before they came home.

When my mother arrived home, she was so happy, and my brother was speechless with surprise. This showed me that God had answered my prayer and really changed me. I knew God was giving me the strength and energy to finish everything in time for Sabbath.

I cannot say that every day has been one of sunshine and joy, but I know that I am walking with Jesus and not by myself. I do my schoolwork and the jobs Mom gives me. And I do other jobs just to praise God and honor Him. ◌

Emmanuel Geran is studying computer networks in Paris, France.

let's talk

? Emmanuel was disgusted with himself for not helping his mother. What did he do?

? When Emmanuel asked God to forgive his sins, he asked God to first remind him of what? [*his sins*] Did God do what Emmanuel asked? Do you think it is important to ask God to remind you of your past sins? Or do you think it is sufficient to simply ask God to forgive your past sins? Why or why not?

? What did Emmanuel do after he prayed? How did his action show that his repentance was real? [*He immediately went out and did the chores his mother had asked him to do. Two days later he found the house unclean and Sabbath dinner not prepared. He could have sat down and watched TV, but he chose to do the work his mother had not been able to do that day.*]

? When was the last time your mom or dad asked you to do something and you ignored it? What does this say about your spiritual condition? What can you do about it?

PRAY pray PRAY

Pray that God will show you where you need to submit to God; pray that you will be willing to turn away from the sin He reveals to you.

GraceLink Connection: Grace.

Vlady loved to invent things; when he needed a spare part, he simply stole it.



Ivaylo

God's Love Lights a Life

Ivaylo Stanoev

Even as a child Vlady loved to tinker with things. Every chance he had he would take apart his mother's kitchen appliances just to see how they worked. He made new things out of old parts.

Vlady's New Landlady

When Vlady was 14, his parents enrolled him in a school in the capital city of Bulgaria, where he could study electronics. They hoped that he would learn to do something useful with his talents for taking things apart. The school was a day school and had no dormitories for students, and the family had no relatives in the big city. So Vlady's father had to find a place for Vlady to live near the school.

The two searched the neighborhood near the school, walking up one street and down the next, but they found nothing suitable. By evening they were very tired and were ready to give up. Then they saw an elderly woman walking toward them.

"Excuse me," Vlady's father said. "Do you know anyone who has a room to rent to my son? He is a student at the technical school."

The woman looked at Vlady. "I rent rooms," she said thoughtfully. "But I usually rent to girls, and only to Christians." The woman looked at Vlady and his father once more, then said, "I actually have a boy staying with me now. If you are willing to stay with him, perhaps we can work something out." Relieved, Vlady and his father followed the woman to her home and looked at the room. They agreed to the arrangement and paid the required rent.

Blown Fuses and a Warning

Vlady loved his classes at the technical school. In the evenings he often fiddled with electrical gadgets. He invented a machine that would turn on his radio every morning and another that turned on the toaster and the coffeemaker automatically, so that when he got out of bed his breakfast was waiting for him.

His landlady said nothing about his inventions until he blew the fuses in the house. "Vlady, you will have to leave the electricity alone!" she warned him.

"But how can I learn if I don't experiment?" he asked.

"Well, OK," his landlady said reluctantly. "But if you continue blowing the fuses, you will have to find somewhere else to live."

Vlady's landlady did not know that Vlady stole the parts he needed to make his inventions. He took pieces from trains, cars, nearby gardens, and the school. He saw nothing wrong with taking parts of machinery that did not belong to him.

Those Adventists

Vlady's landlady and his roommate, Todor, were Adventists. Vlady thought their religion was strange. When Todor prayed in the room, Vlady turned on his radio or talked to distract him. Vlady tried to annoy his landlady, too. Vlady told his parents about his landlady's strange religion and

exaggerated the stories wherever he could. "They don't eat meat," Vlady said. "All they do is pray and read the Bible."

After weeks of being taunted, Todor could stand Vlady's rudeness no longer and moved out of the house. Vlady was glad, for he had the room to himself.

Vlady's Strange Vision

One night Vlady awoke from a sound asleep and saw a bright light filling the room. In the light was a shining face. Vlady was sure it must be Jesus. The eyes seemed to see right through him and know everything that Vlady had done—the things he had stolen and the lies he had told.

Vlady was frightened. "I promise I will not steal anymore," he stammered. The face still looked at him. "I will never lie again," Vlady added. The face grew dim, and Vlady fell back onto his pillow and slept soundly until morning.

The next morning Vlady told his landlady about the vision he

had seen. He described the Being and how He seemed to be talking to Vlady with His eyes. Vlady's landlady picked up the Bible and read some verses. Christ's "face shone like the sun, and his clothes became as white as the light" (Matthew 17:2, NIV).

"That is exactly what I saw!" Vlady cried. "I knew I saw Jesus!" For a week Vlady thought about the vision. His landlady invited him to a youth program at her church, and Vlady went. The young people talked about Jesus in such a convincing manner that Vlady was even more certain that Jesus was real. Vlady began attending church every week and studied the Bible to learn more about Christ. He remembered that Todor had told him to pray when he had a problem. Vlady tried it and found that it really helped.

Vlady's life began to change radically. He took apart all his inventions and where possible, he returned the stolen parts to their rightful owners. He stopped lying and stealing. Todor was surprised

to see him at church, and when Todor learned of Vlady's conversion, he was very happy. He moved back into the room with Vlady, and eventually the two boys became best friends.

Angry Parents

When Vlady's parents learned that he had become an Adventist, they were angry. They remembered how Vlady had described the Adventists as strange and fanatical people. Vlady had to explain that he had lied and had been wrong about the Adventists. He often opened his Bible and prayed when his parents argued with him. One day he read in Proverbs that he should not argue with his parents. Vlady put this command into practice and was surprised at the results it had on his family. They decided that perhaps Adventism was a good thing after all.

Vlady's life was full of inventions before he found Christ. After he found the Lord, his life has been full of Christ. Instead of becoming an electrician, Vlady decided to become a pastor in Bulgaria. He uses his electrical knowledge to help around the church.

Ivaylo Stanoev is a pastor in Bulgaria.

Let's talk

? Vlady grew up in a home that did not teach right and wrong. How did Vlady feel about taking things that did not belong to him and about lying? *[He had stolen and lied so much that he no longer thought much about doing these things until the night of his vision.]*

? When Vlady saw the shining face in his vision, who did he think it was? What was the first thing he told the shining Being? *[He promised not to steal or lie anymore.]*

? Was Vlady's repentance true? How do you know? *[His life changed; he confessed his lies, he returned stolen property, and he tried to make things right with those he had wronged.]*

How can people tell whether Jesus lives in your life? Do your actions show evidence of a love for God and a hatred for doing wrong? How can your life become a shining example of God's love?

PRAY pray PRAY

Pray that every young person who professes to love God will invite God's Spirit to be in them and make them a shining example of God's love so that others will come to Jesus.

GraceLink Connection: Service.

How could I answer the questions? I was not sure if I had enough facts to prove what I believed.



Galina

Standing Bravely for Christ

Galina Gospodinova

[Ask a girl to present this first-person report.]

My name is Galina [gah-LEE-nah], and I live in Bulgaria. My mother began attending the Adventist church when I was young, and eventually she took me with her. I accepted Jesus as my Savior when I was 13 or 14 years old.

I wanted to tell others about the happiness I felt knowing God. But I was uncomfortable talking about something so precious to me, because I had a problem with stammering, which made me shy. It was difficult for me to speak about everyday things, so to tell my friends about Jesus seemed impossible. I did not have much trouble speaking at home, but when I was around other people my stammering became much worse.

I prayed about my stammering, but I did not know how God would answer my prayers. I continued to pray and hope, but nothing happened, and eventually I gave up. Sometime after I quit praying about it—I don't know how long—I

realized that my stammering had stopped. It wasn't an overnight thing; it simply diminished and eventually went away.

Speaking Up

In my high school biology class our teachers taught us about evolution. I did not believe in evolution, of course, but I had no proof that either evolution or creation was a more realistic theory. I found some interesting books that presented facts about nature from a creation point of view and read them, looking for points that I could use to support my belief in creation.

We had just finished our study of evolution, and the teacher announced the date that the test would be given on the material we had covered. I felt sick as I studied for the test. If I answered the questions on the test the way that the teacher wanted us to, I would betray my beliefs. But how could I answer the questions according to my beliefs? I was not sure if I had enough facts about

creation to prove what I believed.

The day of the exam arrived. I went to the classroom and took the exam. I prayed that God would give me the words to write so that I could tell the teacher what I really believed and still not fail the test. Still I was not sure how to answer the questions, but I tried to use the facts I had read from the books to support my answers in favor of creation.

I was not in class the day the teacher gave back the tests, but my friends told me that the teacher announced each student's grade as she gave the tests back. When she came to my exam, she told the class that my exam could not be graded, that the essays I had written on my test had material that was not approved by the government ministry of education. She said she could not evaluate my sources, so she was not sure what to do with my exam.

Unexpected Opportunity

I knew that my teacher was an atheist, and I was afraid that she

might make trouble for me. The teacher explained that she could not evaluate my essays because of the references I had used. I told her that I simply wanted to say what I believed and had used some books from the library as my authority.

I was surprised when the teacher asked me if I would like to be tested on things that would not contradict my beliefs. She said that if we did that, she would be able to give me a grade on the test. I did not expect my teacher to help me. I thought she would react angrily and perhaps even fail me.

When my teacher made the offer to give me a special test, I felt as though God was defending me when I could not defend myself. I did not have the courage to stand up for my faith, but God stood up for me.

I knew that God was in control of that class and my life. I was able to take the alternate test. Even better, I had many opportunities to talk with this

teacher and tell her what I believe. Although she claimed to be an atheist, my teacher is open to learning more. I gave her a Bible as a gift, and she seemed genuinely happy to receive it.

My friends who had been in the biology class with me asked me questions about my beliefs. As I answered them, I realized that God was opening doors for me to tell my friends about Jesus. It felt so good!

More School Problems

I began to have some problems in another one of my classes. It was wintertime, and sunset came before my last class ended. I decided to skip my geography class on Friday afternoons because the sun would set before the class ended.

When my teacher learned why I was absent every Friday, she became angry that I was skipping her class. She told the class that she was going to talk to my parents. But first she spoke to my school advisor, who defended

me. Her defense was so powerful that my geography teacher did not talk to my parents, although she continued to give me trouble in class.

These stories might not seem important to other people, but they are important to me. They show me that God will help us stand for our faith if we ask Him and trust Him to help us. God helped me overcome my shyness and stammering, then He helped me speak up in class and say what I believe.

I often think about Moses' problem with his speech and how God provided for him and used Moses to be a great leader in spite of his speech difficulties. God used me to speak about my faith although I was afraid. I had to depend on Him and not on myself. I am so thankful that I have learned to trust Him with my life. ۞

Galina Gospodinova lives in southern Bulgaria.

let's talk

? Galina had trouble telling her friends about Jesus because she was shy and stammered. What things keep you from telling your friends about Jesus? What did Galina do to overcome her stammering? *[She asked God to take it away.]* What can you do to overcome the things that prevent you from sharing your faith in God with others?

? When Galina was studying evolution in school, what did she do to help bolster her faith in God and creation? *[She read books about nature that supported creation.]* When she took her exam, how did she answer questions that required answers she did not believe? What was the result of her unusual answers on the test? *[Her teacher respected her enough to give her another test on material that did not compromise Galina's faith.]*

PRAY pray
PRAY

Pray for students around the world who must stand for their beliefs in situations that test their faith and character.

Program

The Challenge of Europe

Opening Song	"Working, O Christ, With Thee" <i>The Seventh-day Adventist Hymnal, No. 582</i>	Program	"The Challenge of Europe"
Welcome	Superintendent or Sabbath School teacher	Offering	Ask children to sing a song in French or German while the offering is being taken.
Scripture	Psalm 96:2, 3, 8-13.	Closing Song	"Lift High the Cross" <i>The Seventh-day Adventist Hymnal, No. 362</i>
Prayer			

Participants: Two to four speakers to present reports. *[If you have just two people available, assign each speaker two parts. Ask adults or youth to participate. Choose people who will practice their parts and can present them clearly. While participants do not have to memorize their parts, they should be familiar enough with the content that they can present the material with confidence.]*

* * *

Scripture *(Alternate between two readers)*

Narrator: The Euro-Africa Division encompasses a diverse territory that includes modern western European nations such as France, Germany, and Switzerland; former Communist countries such as Bulgaria, Czech Republic, and Romania; and the Middle-Eastern or Trans-Mediterranean nations of Afghanistan, Algeria, Iran, Libya, Malta, Monaco, and Turkey. The challenges are incredible and ever-changing.

Today's focus is on three of these nations: Germany, Switzerland, and Turkey.

We are not surprised to hear that the ratio of Adventists to the total population of a country in the 10/40 window is several thousand to one. But modern European countries have surprisingly high ratios as well. In Germany the ratio of Adventists to the population is 1 to about 2,300. What is the church in Germany doing to address this trend? _____ *[name of first reporter]* will tell us one proven method to awaken the people of Germany to their need of the Savior.

Reporter 1: When people do not seek God, we must take God to the people. While churches stand almost empty on Sunday mornings, news of God is available via television, radio, and the Internet.

To make the most of these opportunities, the Voice of Hope Media Center in Germany uses every opportunity to spread the gospel of Christ via the media. Their television crews prepare programs for broadcast while their radio facilities prepare programs for Adventist World Radio and other radio stations willing to take religious programming.

Because of restrictive legislation that does not allow a lot of religious broadcasting on public channels, Voice of Hope uses the Internet, the fastest growing avenue to reach people. Thirty days of audio or video programs are available 24 hours a day for people to watch or listen to at their convenience. In 2005 some 50,000 listeners watched or listened to God's message of love through programs stored on the Internet.

The Voice of Hope Bible correspondence school is growing rapidly. Last year more than 23,000 Bible study guides were sent to people within Germany alone, and in 2005, 154 baptisms could be traced to the Bible correspondence school. The two main Christian denominations in Germany have asked Voice of Hope to advertise their Bible studies in their publications. When asked why, one representative explained, "Many of our members are not Christians, and we want them to be Christians."

In order to expand their ministry, the Voice of Hope has broken ground to build a new media center. This will consolidate all their ministries in one place and make their work more efficient. Part of today's Thirteenth Sabbath Offering will help finish this project and spread the Voice of Hope across Germany and throughout Europe.

Narrator: Our second focus this quarter is Geneva, a secular city that wields worldwide power.

_____ *[name of reporter]* will tell us about the project in Geneva.

Reporter 2: Once a hub of activity during the Protestant Reformation, Geneva's churches stand almost entirely empty on Sundays. So why establish a new congregation in a city with so many near-empty churches? The answer is simple: people still need God.

Who would come to a new church? And how would this new congregation differ from the hundreds that struggle to stay open throughout the city? The answers rest on the shoulders of an unusual church planting team made up of theology students from the Adventist seminary in nearby Collonges, France, and young volunteers from Geneva's Adventist churches.

Under the direction of the seminary faculty and conference workers, the youthful church planters plan and present alternative worship programs to

introduce secular young people to Jesus in ways that are relevant to them today. The Adventist youth have made friends with more than 100 university students in the Geneva area plus a number of older people from the community who have come to their meetings. They are growing a strong core of seekers, many of whom, they hope, will become charter members of a vibrant new congregation.

Pray that God will draw these seekers to Himself, for such a church of new believers will attract many others who thought religion was irrelevant in today's world.

Narrator: Imagine establishing a healthy new congregation in the heart of Geneva. It's working, and your Thirteenth Sabbath Offering will help make it a reality.

Our final report comes from Turkey. Officially secular but almost entirely Muslim, Turkey has resisted most efforts at evangelization. _____ *[name of reporter]* will share the challenges and opportunities of this great country.

Reporter 3: Imagine a country of more than 70 million people with only a handful of Seventh-day Adventists. Imagine fewer than one Adventist for every *million* people. Now imagine that the vast majority of the population is not Christian, and many are even unfriendly to Christians. How do

you share the gospel to so many with so few?

This is the challenge that faces the small groups of Adventist believers in Turkey. They share their faith as they can. They prepare radio programs that Adventist World Radio can beam into the country. But they need help reaching people on a one-to-one basis.

Turkish citizens are concerned about their health. Many have developed bad habits that threaten to shorten their life. They want to be free from these habits, but they don't know how to do it. A Better Living center is one way to help people while making friends for Jesus. In this land where open evangelism is impossible, other methods must be explored.

Part of this quarter's Thirteenth Sabbath Offering will help establish an outreach center in Turkey where people can learn to live more healthful lives and where they can experience the abundant life that only Jesus can give.

Narrator: Three distinct needs, three worthy projects, one goal: to lead people to the feet of Jesus. What will you do today to help make these projects a reality? Whatever you do, you are doing it for Jesus.

[Prayer and offering]

Report to Stockholders

Three years ago the Thirteenth Sabbath Offering helped Euro-Africa Division build a seminary in Bulgaria, where young ministerial students and seasoned pastors alike will receive training to lead the church in that formerly Communist nation.

Your Thirteenth Sabbath Offering helped make a dream become a

reality in France, a nation where only one in almost 6,000 is a Seventh-day Adventist. While vibrant churches serve the immigrant and local communities in Paris, we had no church that ministered to the heart of Paris. Thanks to your offering. (For more information on these projects, including photos, go to www.AdventistMission.org.)



Bulgarian Seminary



Paris Church Plant

Charlotte Ishkanian
EDITOR

Hans Olson
MANAGING EDITOR

Deena Bartels-Wagner
Katie Gulbraith Dillon
CONTRIBUTING EDITORS

Office of Adventist Mission

Gary Krause, Director
Rick Kajijura, Communication director
Charlotte Ishkanian, *Mission* editor
Hans Olson, Comm. projects mgr.
Daniel Weber, Video producer/editor
Nancy Kyte, Marketing director
Marti Schneider, Programs director
Homer Trecartin, Planning director

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E-mail: GoMission@gc.adventist.org
Internet: www.adventistmission.org

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Euro-Africa Division

mission
Teen



Euro-Africa Division

Unions	Churches	Membership	Population
Austrian	48	3,716	8,151,000
Bulgarian	114	7,739	7,741,000
Czecho-Slovakian	184	9,677	15,594,000
Franco-Belgian	136	12,780	71,690,000
Italian	100	7,237	59,178,000
North German	357	20,730	47,844,200
Portuguese	94	8,683	10,576,000
Romanian	1,069	70,531	21,612,000
South German	216	15,285	34,645,800
Spanish	88	11,742	43,587,000
Swiss	51	4,287	7,481,000
Trans-Mediterranean Ter.	7	209	252,019,000
Totals, June 30, 2005	2,464	172,616	580,119,000
Projects			
Evangelistic outreach in Geneva, Switzerland			
Outreach to Istanbul, Turkey			
Media Center in Darmstadt, Germany			