



YOUTH & ADULT MISSION




2024 • QUARTER 2 • EURO-ASIA DIVISION



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 = stories of special interest to teens



This quarter we feature the Euro-Asia Division, which oversees the Seventh-day Adventist Church's work in the countries of Afghanistan, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, Russia, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan. The region is home to nearly 292 million people but only 59,522 Adventists. That's a ratio of one Adventist for 4,902 people.

Reaching so many people with the precious proclamation of Jesus' soon coming is a huge challenge for the few church members who live in this vast territory that covers 11 time zones. Jesus' Great Commission of Matthew 28:18–20 can only be accomplished with divine help. As part of that effort, the Euro-Asia Division has chosen five projects in Armenia, Belarus, Georgia, Russia, and

Uzbekistan to receive the Thirteenth Sabbath Offering this quarter. The projects represent the length and depth of the division, with a center of influence for youth in Belarus in the east, a spiritual and social center in Russia in the far north, two projects in Georgia and Armenia in the deep south, and the first Seventh-day Adventist elementary school in Uzbekistan in the east. The projects are listed in the sidebar.

Special Features

If you want to make your Sabbath School class come alive, we offer photos and other materials to accompany each mission story. More information is provided in the sidebar with each story. For photos of tourist sites and other scenes from the featured countries, try a free photo bank such as pixabay.com or unsplash.com. You could show the photos to the children on your computer or mobile device while you read the mission story, or you could print the photos to decorate your Sabbath School room or church bulletin board.

In addition, you can download a PDF of facts and activities from the Euro-Asia Division at bit.ly/esd-2024. Follow us at facebook.com/missionquarterlies. You also can download the PDF version of the *Mission* magazine at bit.ly/adultmission, and *Mission Spotlight* videos at bit.ly/missionspotlight.

If you have found especially effective ways to share mission stories, please let me know at mcchesneya@gc.adventist.org.

Thank you for encouraging others to be mission-minded!

Opportunities

This quarter's Thirteenth Sabbath Offering will establish five projects in the Euro-Asia Division:

- Center of influence for families, Yerevan, Armenia
- Center of influence for youth, Minsk, Belarus
- Health center, Tskaltubo, Georgia
- Spiritual and social center, Salekhard, Russia
- Elementary school, Tashkent, Uzbekistan



A Heart For Mission

Artyom

When Artyom was small, about 5 years old, he went to the Seventh-day Adventist church with Father and Grandmother a few times in Uzbekistan.

But then Father and Mother divorced. Artyom lived with Mother, and she forbade him from going to church. Like many people in Uzbekistan and other countries of the former Soviet Union, she viewed Adventists as members of a sect that had broken away from the Christian church.

Artyom never set foot inside an Adventist church again until he was 17. Then he went because Father told him that he was grown up and needed to get baptized. Artyom took Bible studies and, two years later, gave his heart to Jesus in baptism. He loved God with all his heart, and he helped the local church by manning its sound equipment.

Mother, meanwhile, had remarried, and Artyom lived with her and his stepfather.

One Thursday, his stepfather forbade him from going to church to help with the sound equipment for a music rehearsal. Mother was away from the house at the time.

“You can’t go today,” his stepfather said.

But Artyom wanted to go. He wanted to help with the sound equipment.

“I am going,” he replied.

“No, you aren’t going,” his stepfather said.

“I am going,” Artyom said.

“You have a choice,” his stepfather said.

“Everything will be fine if you stop going to church. Or you can go to church — and take your belongings with you and leave this house forever.”

Artyom took his belongings and left. He wept as he went to the home of his father and grandmother. They welcomed him in.

Living with Father and Grandmother, Artyom grew closer to God as he prayed and read the Bible for hours at a time. He was especially moved as he read the promise that Jesus gave in Mark 10:29–30. The passage reads, “So Jesus answered and said, ‘Assuredly, I say to you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or father or mother or wife or children or lands, for My sake and the gospel’s, who shall not receive a hundredfold now in this time — houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and lands, with persecutions — and in the age to come, eternal life’” (NKJV).

Artyom had left everything, and it seemed like Jesus was saying to him, “Take courage! You will have a house and eternal life.”

The peace that Artyom was enjoying in his new home shattered when Father stopped going to church and began drinking. One Sabbath, Father told Artyom that he needed help at work. Father made furniture at home.

Artyom refused. “Let’s do it on another day,” he said.

Father angrily ordered the teen out of the house. “Get out of here!” he said.

Artyom had nowhere to go. He received permission to live at the Adventist church.

Months passed, and his mother and stepfather invited him to return home. They said he could go to church whenever he wanted. Artyom returned home, but tensions lingered. Father died a few months later, and he moved back to live with Grandmother. All this time, he kept on praying and reading the Bible. Then an Adventist friend had an idea.

“Let’s pray that God gives you someone to give Bible studies to,” he said.

The two started praying. One month passed. Two months and three months passed. Artyom noticed a steady trickle of visitors at church, and he invited several to study the Bible with him. Soon he had formed a small group that met regularly.

As they studied, a desire grew in Artyom’s heart to become a missionary. He heard about Global Mission pioneers, people who share the gospel within their own culture. He prayed to become a Global Mission pioneer.

Then he went to the church pastor to ask how to become a Global Mission pioneer. But before he could open his mouth, the pastor spoke. “I have good news for you,” the pastor said. We would like to invite you to become a Global Mission pioneer.”

Artyom was surprised! The pastor had answered his question before he even asked it.

Today, Artyom is 22 years old, and his biggest desire is to help many people prepare for Jesus’ soon coming.

“I’m seeing the first fruits of my labors,” he said. “I have consecrated my life to God, and my goal in life is to bring people to Christ.” 🌍

Part of this quarter’s Thirteenth Sabbath Offering will help open the first Seventh-day Adventist elementary school in Uzbekistan. Thank you for planning a generous offering on June 29.

By Andrew McChesney

Story Tips

- Show the location of Uzbekistan on the map. Then show Tashkent, the capital of Uzbekistan, and the future location of a Seventh-day Adventist elementary school, one of this quarter’s Thirteenth Sabbath Offering projects.
- Watch a short YouTube video of Artyom: bit.ly/Artyom-ESD.
- Download photos for this story from Facebook: bit.ly/fb-mq.
- Share Mission Posts and Fast Facts from the Euro-Asia Division: bit.ly/esd-2024.
- Learn more about Global Mission pioneers: bit.ly/GMpioneers.
- Read next week about Artur, a teen who learned about God through Artyom.
- Know this mission story illustrates the following objectives of the Seventh-day Adventist Church’s “I Will Go” strategic plan: Mission Objective No. 1, “To revive the concept of worldwide mission and sacrifice for mission as a way of life involving not only pastors but every church member, young and old, in the joy of witnessing for Christ and making disciples”; Spiritual Growth Objective No. 6, “To increase accession, retention, reclamation, and participation of children, youth, and young adults”; and Spiritual Growth Objective No. 7, “To help youth and young adults place God first and exemplify a biblical worldview.” For more information about the plan, go to the website: IWillGo2020.org.

Mission Post

- Seventh-day Adventists in Uzbekistan suffered from the repressions of the 1930s. The congregations held worship services in secret, believers gathered in small groups, the number of ministers was insufficient, and new baptisms were sporadic.

One Broken String



UZBEKISTAN | April 13

Artur

Artur got baptized in Uzbekistan when he was 5. But he didn't know anything about God. No one spoke to him about God or took him back to church after his baptism.

Even though he never thought about God, he began wearing a cross-shaped earring when he was 14. He thought it looked cool.

Then Artur told his mother that he wanted to learn to play the guitar.

Mother took him straight to a music store. Artur's life was aimless, and she thought that a guitar might give him some purpose. Artur picked out a brown electric guitar.

At home, he found guitar lessons on YouTube and started trying to play. It wasn't easy. Pressing down on the strings hurt his fingers. But after a few days, the pain began to subside. His music, however, didn't sound anything like that of the YouTube teacher.

Two weeks after buying the guitar, a string snapped. Artur didn't know how to change the string, so he looked for help online. He found the phone number of someone named

Artyom who offered guitar lessons. He called. "I need to change a string," he said. "Can you help?"

Artyom gave Artur his home address.

The address sounded familiar. Artur wondered where he had heard it. Then he remembered. His mother used to work with a man named Pasha at that address. The two had built furniture together. Pasha had died.

"Are you by any chance Pasha's son?"

Artur asked.

"Yes, I am," Artyom said.

The next day, Artyom replaced the guitar string. Afterward, he asked Artur if he knew how to play. Artur tried to show what he had learned on YouTube, but Artyom stopped him.

"Stop, stop!" he said. "You're playing the chords backward."

Suddenly, Artur understood why his music didn't sound at all like that of the teacher on YouTube. He hadn't been playing correctly.

Artyom invited Artur to guitar lessons.

At the first lesson, Artyom commented on the cross-shaped earring in Artur's ear. "Are you a Christian?" he asked.

Artur said he wasn't a Christian.

At the second lesson, Artyom suggested meeting the next time in a room at the local Seventh-day Adventist church. The church was close to Artur's home, and he agreed.

As Artur learned to play the guitar, he began to spend time with Artyom outside of lessons. He learned that Artyom was a Global Mission pioneer, a missionary who shares the gospel with people in his own culture. He accepted invitations to go hiking with Artyom and other Adventists in the mountains. When the hikers sat down to rest, Artur enjoyed

listening to them sing songs. Artyom played along on the guitar.

That summer, Artur went to an Adventist youth retreat in another city. He was caught off guard when a retreat speaker asked the attendees to split into pairs to pray.

“I’m an atheist,” he told the first person who offered to pray with him.

The person went away.

Artur also told the next person who came over that he didn’t believe in God. “Moreover,” he added, “I’ve never prayed before.”

This person didn’t go away. “We can fix that,” he said. He taught Artur to pray.

That night, Artur thought for a long time about what had taken place.

On Sabbath, he was amazed to see a young man get baptized at the retreat.

“I was baptized when I was 5,” he said. “Why do Adventists baptize adults?”

He learned that Adventists understand the Bible to teach that people should be old enough to understand the Bible and the commitment that they are making to God before being baptized.

The next Sabbath, Artur went to the Adventist church near his home to worship for the first time. In the afternoon, he joined church members in handing out school supplies to needy children. He felt a new joy fill his heart, and he thought, “What is the point of living if I don’t help others?”

It was a turning point in his life. He no longer wanted to live an aimless existence. He resolved to help others and to know God.

Eight months have passed since Artur started attending church regularly. He has been studying the Bible, and he wants to give his heart to Jesus in baptism.

He is glad that his guitar string broke.

“I believed in God because of a broken guitar string,” he said. 🌍

Part of this quarter’s Thirteenth Sabbath Offering will help open the first Seventh-day Adventist elementary school in Uzbekistan.

By Andrew McChesney

Story Tips

- Show the location of Uzbekistan on the map. Then show Tashkent, the capital of Uzbekistan, and the future location of a Seventh-day Adventist elementary school, one of this quarter’s Thirteenth Sabbath Offering projects.
- Watch a short YouTube video of Artur: bit.ly/Artur-ESD.
- Download photos for this story from Facebook: bit.ly/fb-mq.
- Share Mission Posts and Fast Facts from the Euro-Asia Division: bit.ly/esd-2024.
- Learn more about Global Mission pioneers: bit.ly/GMpioneers.
- Read about Artyom last week.
- Know this mission story illustrates the following objectives of the Seventh-day Adventist Church’s “I Will Go” strategic plan: Spiritual Growth Objective No. 6, “To increase accession, retention, reclamation, and participation of children, youth, and young adults”; and Spiritual Growth Objective No. 7, “To help youth and young adults place God first and exemplify a biblical worldview.” For more information, go to the website: IWillGo2020.org.

Fast Facts

- Uzbekistan is one of two doubly landlocked countries in the world (a landlocked country completely surrounded by other landlocked countries), the other being Liechtenstein.
- Uzbekistan mines 80 tons of gold every year.
- There is a great deal of grain farmed in Uzbekistan, so both bread and noodles are common in Uzbek cuisine.
- Uzbek cotton is used to make banknotes in South Korea.

Goodbye to the Past

UZBEKISTAN | April 20

Vlad



For Vlad, life centered on money, money, money. He made good money when the Soviet Union collapsed and Uzbekistan emerged as an independent country in the early 1990s. During the day, he ran a small factory that churned out butter. At night, he ran an illegal poker business.

Vlad lived a high life with his wife, Marina, and they bought multiple apartments in Uzbekistan's capital, Tashkent.

But then Vlad was caught and sent to prison. His wife left him. Everything seemed to be falling apart. In prison, Vlad thought about God for the first time. "If You help me, I'll believe in You," he prayed. "If You don't help me, I won't believe in You."

One month and 18 days later, he was released from prison. He was a free man under a general presidential amnesty.

Vlad forgot his prayer and went back to seeking money. He got remarried and worked in South Korea for a while. Then he returned to Uzbekistan.

His thoughts returned to God when his

second wife, Alyona, started attending evangelistic meetings at a Seventh-day Adventist church in Tashkent. She invited him to go with her. After the meetings ended, they kept going to the church. For Vlad, life stopped revolving around money. Life started revolving around love — love for God and love for other people. Three years passed, and Vlad gave his heart to Jesus and was baptized.

Then he began to work as a Global Mission pioneer, a missionary who shares the gospel to his own people. He shared the gospel with fellow Uzbeks. His once-large income fell to just a few hundred dollars a month.

A test of his new priorities came when he was contacted by his first wife, Marina.

"We co-own three downtown apartments," she said. "Give them to me."

Marina had been living in one of the apartments. The other two were vacant. Vlad lived with his second wife at her mother's home. To change ownership, Vlad only needed to sign several documents before a notary. "Fine," Vlad said. "Let's meet at the notary's office, and I will sign over the apartments to you."

The notary was brimming with questions.

"Do you co-own these three apartments?" she asked Vlad.

"Yes," he said.

"Do you understand that they are worth several hundred thousand dollars?" she asked.

“Yes,” he said.

“You are giving them to your former wife for nothing?”

“Yes.”

“How long have you been divorced?”

“Twelve years.”

“Where do you live now?”

“With my wife at her mother’s place.”

The notary looked at Vlad with surprise. Marina frowned. She didn’t like the notary’s questions.

“What are you doing?” she said. “Don’t meddle in our personal business.”

The notary asked Vlad to sign an additional document stating that he was in his right mind. Then she watched as Vlad signed the apartments over to Marina.

When he had finished, she shook her head incredulously and turned to Marina.

“While your former husband has this burning desire to give away apartments, ask him if he owns anymore,” she said.

Marina looked at Vlad.

“Do you own anymore?” she asked.

“No, that’s all that I have,” he said.

Then he asked her for forgiveness.

“Forgive me if I have upset you in any way,” he said.

It was Marina’s turn to look at Vlad with surprise. “You’re crazy,” she said.

Vlad didn’t mind her sharp words. He left the notary’s office with a spring in his step and joy in his heart. He was happy to hand over the apartments. They were part of a past life without God. He didn’t need any reminders of his old ways.

Vlad said in an interview that his love for money is a thing of the past. Today, he loves God and loves sharing Him with others.

“God provides for all of my needs,” he said. 🌍

Part of this quarter’s Thirteenth Sabbath Offering will help open the first Seventh-day Adventist elementary school in Tashkent, Uzbekistan. Thank you for planning a generous offering on June 29.

By Andrew McChesney

Story Tips

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Fast Facts

- Uzbekistan was once the heart of the Silk Road, the route between the East and West through which goods traveled across Asia and Europe.
- The national dish of Uzbekistan is plov, a Central Asian pilaf consisting of rice and fried vegetables generally eaten for lunch.
- Uzbekistan was occupied by Alexander the Great when he captured Samarkand in 329 BC.

“God, Help Me”

UZBEKISTAN | April 27

Alla



As a small girl, Alla didn't understand what Grandmother was doing when she knelt before icons in their home in the Soviet republic of Uzbekistan.

“I'm praying,” Grandmother said.

“Why are you praying?” Alla asked. “Who are you praying to?”

“I'm praying to the God who lives in heaven,” Grandmother said. “We need to love Him because He loves us. We need to fear Him.”

Grandmother had a crucifix of Jesus on the wall, and Alla asked who was hanging on it.

“That is Jesus, our God,” Grandmother said. “He came to Earth, and people killed Him.”

That was all that young Alla knew about God. She didn't have much faith, but she understood that she could pray to God. So, whenever she was scared, she prayed.

“God, help me,” she prayed.

The Soviet Union collapsed, and Uzbekistan became an independent country. The once-quiet streets of her town became more dangerous as drunkards and drug users came out at night. When Alla walked home at night,

she prayed, “God, help me.”

Alla got married, and she had a boy and a girl. A church opened in her town, and she took her children there every Sunday. She lit candles and prayed there. But every time she left the church, she felt empty inside. Something seemed to be missing.

One day, a friend gave her a book as a gift. It was *Patriarchs and Prophets*. Alla had never heard of the author, Ellen White. But she was amazed at her vivid recounting of Old Testament stories. She read for the first time that the seventh day, Saturday, was God's Sabbath. A desire grew in her to go to a church where people worshipped on the seventh-day Sabbath. But where?

Several years passed.

Then an old friend, a former classmate, came to visit from another town. She told Alla that she was worshipping on Sabbath at a Seventh-day Adventist church. Alla was surprised and delighted. She wondered, “Are there really people in Uzbekistan who keep the seventh-day Sabbath?”

Her friend, who used to be an atheist, enthusiastically spoke about how she had learned about God and how she now loved Him with all her heart.

To Alla, her friend was a new person. She was nothing like she had been before.

A short time later, Alla went to visit her friend, who lived four hours away by bus. She visited the Adventist church on Sabbath. She liked everything about it. But the church was too far away for her to visit every Sabbath.

“God, help me,” she prayed.

Then Alla’s daughter, Violeta, got married and moved to Uzbekistan’s capital, Tashkent. After that, Alla’s husband died, and she moved to Tashkent to be with Violeta. She learned from her Adventist friend that there were three Adventist churches in Tashkent.

Alla and Violeta began to worship in church every Sabbath. A church member offered Bible studies, and the mother and daughter completed all 28 lessons. Alla began to think about giving her heart to Jesus in baptism.

“God, help me,” she prayed.

Then the president of Zaoksky Adventist University, the church’s seminary in Russia, arrived in town for evangelistic meetings. When he made an altar call, she was the first to go forward. She and her daughter got baptized with eight other people.

Today, Alla and Violeta are faithful church deaconesses.

“We are glad to serve God,” Alla said.

God had heard her prayers. He had helped her, and her heart was full. 🌍

Part of this quarter’s Thirteenth Sabbath Offering will help open the first Seventh-day Adventist elementary school in Tashkent, Uzbekistan. Thank you for planning a generous offering on June 29.

By Andrew McChesney

Story Tips

- Show the location of Uzbekistan on the map. Then show Tashkent, the capital of Uzbekistan, and the future location of a Seventh-day Adventist elementary school, one of this quarter’s Thirteenth Sabbath Offering projects. Also show Zaoksky, Russia, where Zaoksky Adventist University is located just south of Moscow. The university president spoke at the meetings in Tashkent. Three years ago, part of the Thirteenth Sabbath Offering went to construct a new building for an Adventist elementary school and high school in Zaoksky.
- Watch a short YouTube video of Alla describing how she learned about God: bit.ly/Alla-ESD.
- Download photos for this story from Facebook: bit.ly/fb-mq.
- Share Mission Posts and Fast Facts from the Euro-Asia Division: bit.ly/esd-2024.
- Read more about Alla’s daughter, Violeta, next week.
- Know this mission story illustrates Spiritual Growth Objective No. 5 of the Seventh-day Adventist Church’s “I Will Go” strategic plan, “To disciple individuals and families into Spirit-filled lives.” The evangelistic meetings illustrate Mission Objective No. 2, “To strengthen and diversify Adventist outreach in large cities, across the 10/40 Window, among unreached and under-reached people groups, and to non-Christian religions.” For more information, go to the website: IWillGo2020.org.

Fast Facts

- The Aral Sea was once the fourth-largest inland sea on Earth, but it has shrunk to about 10 percent of its former size since the 1960s, when overuse of its water began.

Balking at Baptism



UZBEKISTAN | May 4

Violeta

Violeta didn't feel like she was ready for baptism when the Seventh-day Adventist preacher made an appeal during an evangelistic meeting in Tashkent, the capital of Uzbekistan.

Her knowledge of the Bible seemed too small. The preacher's call for people to give their whole lives to God seemed too big.

"I can't do that!" she thought. "I won't do that!"

Violeta had been worshipping with her mother at an Adventist church for some time. The two had completed Bible studies together with a small group.

Then the president of Zaoksky Adventist University, the church's seminary in Russia, came to Tashkent to lead evangelistic meetings. When he appealed for people to give their hearts to God in baptism, Violeta's mother was the first to go to the front. Then Violeta saw the 14-year-old son of their church pastor go up. After that, a third person went forward. But Violeta didn't budge. "No," she thought. "I'm not going to

get baptized at this time."

The next night, the preacher made the call again. Violeta remembered that a church friend had been encouraging her to get baptized, saying, "If you have finished the Bible studies, you can get baptized." But she didn't feel ready. She didn't think that she knew the Bible well enough.

As the preacher made his appeal, he seemed to be looking directly at her. She firmly shook her head no.

On the last night of the meetings, the preacher made a final appeal.

"Who would like to give their hearts to Jesus in baptism?" he asked.

Violeta wondered what to do. She was convinced that the Adventist Church taught only truth from the Bible. But she still didn't feel ready.

The preacher invited people who had responded to his appeals on previous nights to come forward again. Violeta's mother and about a dozen other people went to the front. The preacher welcomed them, but he didn't

give up. He made another appeal.

“There must be someone out there,” he said. “Does anyone else want to come forward?”

He called and called. Each time he spoke, Violeta felt like he was appealing directly to her.

“Should I go up?” she thought.

Before she knew it, she found herself getting up and going to the front.

“That’s it,” the preacher said. “That’s the person whom we have been waiting for.”

But Violeta wasn’t the last person to go forward. When she reached the front, a 60-year-old man came up and stood beside her. They had attended Bible studies together. “I was scared,” he said. “But when I saw you go up, I found the courage to come up, too.”

Violeta was astonished. She had never thought that her inner struggle and ultimate decision might affect someone else. Joy filled her heart.

Today, Violeta is happy that she got baptized. She said that she realizes there was no reason to wait. She didn’t need to know the whole Bible to get baptized. All she needed to do was give Jesus her whole life and to believe in Him with her whole heart. After all, when the jailer asked Paul and Silas what he needed to do to be saved, they replied, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved, you and your household” (Acts 16:31, NKJV).

Violeta also is thrilled that God was able to use her decision to encourage the 60-year-old man to get baptized.

The impact of her decision continues to grow. Now her 9-year-old son also wants to be baptized. “I want him to grow up on the right path,” she said. 🌍

Part of this quarter’s Thirteenth Sabbath Offering will help open the first Seventh-day Adventist elementary school in Tashkent, Uzbekistan, where Violeta’s son and other children can learn about God. Thank you for planning a generous offering on June 29.

By Andrew McChesney

Story Tips

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- Know this mission story illustrates Spiritual Growth Objective No. 5 of the Seventh-day Adventist Church’s “I Will Go” strategic plan, “To disciple individuals and families into Spirit-filled lives.” The evangelistic meetings illustrate Mission Objective No. 2, “To strengthen and diversify Adventist outreach in large cities, across the 10/40 Window, among unreached and under-reached people groups, and to non-Christian religions.” For more information, go to the website: IWillGo2020.org.

Fast Facts

- Soccer is the most popular sport in Uzbekistan. Traditional wrestling is also very popular.
- The official language is Uzbek, but Russian is commonly spoken.



God Is Real

Sonya

When Sonya finished high school, she wanted more than anything to study medicine at a prestigious college. But to enroll at the college, she would need to pay a big bribe.

Nowadays, bribes are not necessary to enter schools in Sonya's home country of Uzbekistan. But life was different when Sonya prepared to go to college.

Sonya told her father about her desire to study medicine at the college.

Immediately, he declared, "I will not give a bribe."

Nevertheless, Sonya filled out the college application forms, hoping for the best.

As her high school graduation approached, she shared her dream with relatives, friends, and teachers. They all seemed to ask the same question, "Have you gathered the money for a big bribe?"

Sonya grew worried. She knew Father's mind was made up. Furthermore, he didn't have money for a bribe, and he wasn't making any effort to borrow money from relatives or friends. He only was praying for God to help her study medicine.

Mother, who worked as a schoolteacher, was also praying.

Sonya wasn't sure what to think. She had worshipped with her parents at a Seventh-day Adventist church since she was young, but she wasn't convinced that God was real. Was it enough to only pray and wait?

Mother had an idea.

"You need to prepare for the college entrance exam, and we'll keep praying," she said.

Sonya was surprised. Mother seemed to be saying that prayers needed to be combined with some effort on her part. She began to study. But the date for the exam was unclear. When she turned in her college admission forms, she learned that the date had not been set yet.

"We'll call you," a college administrator said.

Sonya graduated from high school and kept on studying for the exam. One month passed. Two months passed. Sonya's parents prayed as she studied. No one called from the college.

Finally, near the end of the summer, Sonya called the college to ask about the date.

“You need to come in, and we’ll talk about it at the college,” said the person who answered the call.

Sonya and Mother arrived at the college at 10 o’clock in the morning. A guard stopped them at the front gate.

“All of the entrance exams are over,” he said.

Sonya was shocked. Then she grew indignant. She had turned in the application on time, but no one had called to give her the date as promised. She felt like she had wasted the whole summer studying for the entrance exam.

Mother saw Sonya’s distress.

“Has the college released the results for the entrance exams?” she asked the guard.

“Yes,” he said. “Go over there, and you can see the list of students who have been accepted.”

Mother went over to look. Sonya followed close behind. As they looked down the list, Sonya suddenly spotted her name.

“Look!” she exclaimed. “I’ve been accepted!”

Of the many students who had applied, she had been accepted without a bribe or even an entrance exam.

All of her doubts about God disappeared immediately. Before college started, Sonya gave her heart to Jesus in baptism.

“The experience taught me that God is real,” she said.

But that was not the end of the story.

After classes began, fellow students asked Sonya how much extra she had had pay to enter the college.

“Nothing,” she said. “I didn’t even have to take the entrance exam.”

Astonished, they asked, “Then how did you ever end up becoming a student here?”

“I have connections,” she replied.

Later, as the students got to know one another better, they learned that Sonya’s connection was God. Several wanted to know more about her beliefs, and Sonya formed a Bible study group. Three classmates gave their hearts to Jesus and were baptized.

Today, Sonya seeks opportunities every day to share her faith.

Story Tips

- Show the location of Uzbekistan on the map. Then show Tashkent, the capital of Uzbekistan, and the future location of a Seventh-day Adventist elementary school, one of this quarter’s Thirteenth Sabbath Offering projects.
- Download photos for this story from Facebook: bit.ly/fb-mq.
- Share Mission Posts and Fast Facts from the Euro-Asia Division: bit.ly/esd-2024.
- Know this mission story illustrates the following objectives of the Seventh-day Adventist Church’s “I Will Go” strategic plan: Spiritual Growth Objective No. 5, “To disciple individuals and families into Spirit-filled lives”; Spiritual Growth Objective No. 6, “To increase accession, retention, reclamation, and participation of children, youth, and young adults”; and Spiritual Growth Objective No. 7, “To help youth and young adults place God first and exemplify a biblical worldview.” For more information, go to the website: IWillGo2020.org.

Fast Facts

- Uzbekistan’s flag is blue, white, and green with narrow red stripes between the others. The white crescent moon in the upper corner represents the birth of the independent republic, and the 12 white stars stand for the months of the year.

“God is real,” she said. 🌍

Part of this quarter’s Thirteenth Sabbath Offering will help open the first Seventh-day Adventist elementary school in Tashkent, Uzbekistan. Thank you for planning a generous offering on June 29.

By Andrew McChesney

Bus-Stop Miracle



GEORGIA | May 18

Chogik and Tei

Chogik spoke four languages, but she didn't like to read in any of them. She had never liked to read, and she had not opened a book in years. Then she met Tei at a rural bus stop in the former Soviet republic of Georgia.

Chogik was waiting at the bus stop when Tei arrived. Tei was a Global Mission pioneer, a missionary who shared the gospel with people from her own culture in Georgia. The two women were waiting for the same bus.

"When will the bus come?" Chogik asked.

Tei knew the bus driver.

"The bus should arrive in just a few minutes," she said. "I called the driver, and he said he was getting close."

Tei and Chogik began to talk.

Soon they realized that they lived in the same town some distance away. It turned out that Tei knew Chogik's mother, brother, nieces, and nephews. She had taken food to them during the COVID lockdown.

The two women enjoyed their conversation and exchanged contact information after they boarded the bus. For the next few weeks, they

exchanged text messages by cellphone.

On Chogik's birthday, Tei surprised her with gifts of a saltshaker and a bouquet of red, white, and yellow roses from her garden. Chogik was overjoyed to receive the gifts at the store where she worked as a salesclerk.

After that, the two women began to visit each other at home. Chogik learned that Tei was a Seventh-day Adventist. She had never heard of Seventh-day Adventists, and she wanted to know more.

Tei learned that Chogik could speak four languages but didn't like to read. She hadn't opened a book since she graduated from high school 15 years earlier. Tei wondered, "How can I teach Chogik about God if she doesn't check my words against the Word of God?"

As Tei pondered the question, she invited her new friend to worship at an Adventist church in Georgia's capital, Tbilisi, located some distance away by bus. Her plan was to worship in the church in the morning and then stay for an afternoon seminar on how to give Bible studies. She invited Chogik to the morning worship service, thinking that she would not be interested in the afternoon program since she didn't like to read.

But Chogik was so pleased with the invitation to go to Tbilisi that she declared she would spend the whole day with Tei. Not wanting to offend Chogik, Tei agreed.

Chogik enjoyed the Sabbath worship service. She went up to the front when the preacher offered to pray for those desiring a closer walk with God.

At the afternoon seminar, a group of pastors sat on the church platform. The sanctuary was filled with church members

who wished to learn how to give Bible studies. One of the pastors called out to Chogik, “Sister, are you baptized?”

“No,” she said.

“I need you,” he said, and invited her onto the platform.

Chogik shyly went forward. Tei took a seat beside her on the platform to make her feel more comfortable.

Then the pastor modeled giving a Bible study, using Chogik as an example. The pastor asked Chogik to open a Bible to find answers to Bible study questions. Chogik opened a Bible for the first time in her life. The pastor showed her how to find the verses and the answers to the questions.

On the trip back home, Tei asked Chogik what she thought about the Bible study.

“I liked looking up answers in the Bible,” she said. “I feel so good now. I feel a peace that I never felt before.”

Tei reached into her bag and pulled out a Bible. “I have a gift for you,” she said.

Chogik asked Tei to give her Bible studies.

Tei was so happy. The Holy Spirit had done the seemingly impossible. Chogik not only wanted to read for the first time in her life, but she also wanted to read the Bible.

Today, Tei and Chogik are studying the Bible together, and Chogik is learning a fifth language, heaven’s eternal language of love. The women worship together on Sabbath.

In an interview, Tei praised God for the unexpected meeting with Chogik at the bus stop. “I met Chogik at the bus stop by accident,” she said. “But it was no accident. It was a great miracle of God.”

Chogik said she still doesn’t like reading books — with the exception of the Bible. “I don’t like to read, but I love to read the Bible,” she said. 🌍

Part of this quarter’s Thirteenth Sabbath Offering will help open a health center in Georgia. Thank you for planning a generous offering on June 29.

By Andrew McChesney

Story Tips

- Show the location of Georgia on the map. Then show Tbilisi, the capital, where the two women went to church on Sabbath; and Tskaltubo, the future location of a Seventh-day Adventist health center, one of this quarter’s Thirteenth Sabbath Offering projects.
- Pronounce Chogik as: SHOW-geek.
- Pronounce Tei as: TAY-ah.
- Watch a short YouTube video of Chogik and Tei: bit.ly/Chogik-Tei.
- Download photos for this story from Facebook: bit.ly/fb-mq.
- Share Mission Posts and Fast Facts from the Euro-Asia Division: bit.ly/esd-2024.
- Learn more about Global Mission pioneers: bit.ly/GMpioneers.
- Know this mission story illustrates the following objectives of the Seventh-day Adventist Church’s “I Will Go” strategic plan: Mission Objective No. 1, “To revive the concept of worldwide mission and sacrifice for mission as a way of life involving not only pastors but every church member, young and old, in the joy of witnessing for Christ and making disciples”; Spiritual Growth Objective No. 5, “To disciple individuals and families into Spirit-filled lives”; and Spiritual Growth Objective No. 6, “To increase accession, retention, reclamation, and participation of children, youth, and young adults.” For more information, go to the website: IWillGo2020.org.

Mission Post

- Dr. Vagram Pampaian, an American medical doctor with an Armenian background, arrived in Tbilisi with his wife and brother in 1904 and was the first official Seventh-day Adventist missionary in Georgia.

Calling Random Numbers



ARMENIA | May 25

Lyubov

women began to speak regularly. During one conversation, Olga mentioned that her mother-in-law was old, ill, and not a Christian.

“Go to your mother-in-law,” Lyubov said. “Tell her about Jesus. Ask her to accept Jesus as her personal Savior.”

When Lyubov called back a few days later, Olga said her mother-in-law had died. But she had hope. “The very day that we spoke, I went to her and told her about Jesus,” she said. “She accepted Jesus as her personal Savior and asked Him to forgive her sins. That night, she died.”

Two years later, Olga gave her own heart to Jesus and was baptized with another relative.

Lyubov was thrilled! Three people — Olga, her mother-in-law, and another relative — had been won to Christ over the telephone.

Lyubov kept on making phone calls. One caller began to cry when Lyubov mentioned God. “I have a daughter who isn’t feeling well,” the sobbing voice said. “She has serious epilepsy. She has lost all hope. You can talk with her if you like.”

Before Lyubov could reply, the mother handed the phone to her 23-year-old daughter, Alla.

Lyubov spoke, but Alla didn’t reply. The phone was dead quiet on the other end. Lyubov wasn’t used to one-sided phone calls, and she prayed for help.

When she called the next time, she told Alla that she was reading *Early Writings* by Ellen White and was enjoying her description of the New Earth. Alla was silent.

Lyubov described the lovely garden that God was preparing for His children on the New Earth. Alla was silent.

Then Lyubov remembered a popular

Lyubov wanted more than anything to share her love for Jesus in Armenia. But how?

A friend suggested that she witness over the telephone. It was 1995, an era long before cellphones in the former Soviet republic. She would have to call over a landline phone.

Lyubov had never spoken to strangers over the phone. The idea scared her. She didn’t know where to start. For seven days, she prayed for God to reveal to her whether it was His will for her to witness over the phone.

As she prayed, a desire slowly grew in her heart to talk to strangers. On the seventh day, she prayed, “Tell me which number to call.” Then she dialed a random number.

“Hello,” she told the stranger. “I want to study the Bible with you.”

The response and those that followed were not encouraging. Some people who answered the phone were upset. Others listened carefully but declined Bible studies.

Then Lyubov called an elderly woman named Olga. She agreed to Bible studies.

Olga enjoyed the phone calls, and the two

Soviet-era cartoon that also featured a beautiful garden.

“Do you know that cartoon?” she asked.

Delighted laughter broke out on the other end. Lyubov was surprised. It was the first sound that Alla had made.

“You know how to laugh!” she exclaimed. “Imagine that God has prepared a garden for us that is even more beautiful than the one in the cartoon.”

Lyubov kept talking about the New Earth. Then she heard a click on the line and the sound of a woman’s voice.

“Excuse me,” the woman said. “I’ve been listening to you for a long time. What you are saying is very interesting.”

Alla laughed heartily. Words of joy spilled out of her mouth. She was delighted that someone had been eavesdropping unexpectedly on their call on the party line.

Then Alla’s mother came onto the line. She was happy to hear Alla talking, and she was wondering what had caused her to laugh.

So it was that three people — Alla, her mother, and their neighbor — began to participate in Lyubov’s Bible study.

A few weeks later, a man joined the call.

“Excuse me,” he said, interrupting the Bible study one day. “I’ve been listening to your conversation. It’s very interesting.”

He introduced himself as a leader from another Christian denomination. Then Lyubov had four people taking Bible studies.

After some time, Alla gave her heart to Jesus and was baptized. Her epileptic attacks stopped, and she is a faithful Adventist today.

Lyubov praised God for the opportunity to witness over the phone. “I’m very grateful to the Lord God for the gift that He has given me to serve people, especially strangers, over the phone,” she said. 🌍

Part of this quarter’s Thirteenth Sabbath Offering will help open a center of influence that will help families know about God in Yerevan, Armenia, where Lyubov lives.

By Andrew McChesney

Story Tips

- Show the location of Armenia on the map. Then show Yerevan, the country’s capital, and future location of a center of influence for families, one of this quarter’s Thirteenth Sabbath Offering projects.
- Pronounce Lyubov as: LOO-bof.
- Watch a short YouTube video of Lyubov: bit.ly/Lyubov-ESD.
- Download photos for this story from Facebook: bit.ly/fb-mq.
- Share Mission Posts and Fast Facts from the Euro-Asia Division: bit.ly/esd-2024.
- Adventist Mission isn’t identifying Alla by her real name to protect her privacy.
- Know this mission story illustrates the following objectives of the Seventh-day Adventist Church’s “I Will Go” strategic plan: Mission Objective No. 1, “To revive the concept of worldwide mission and sacrifice for mission as a way of life involving not only pastors but every church member, young and old, in the joy of witnessing for Christ and making disciples”; Spiritual Growth Objective No. 5, “To disciple individuals and families into Spirit-filled lives”; and Spiritual Growth Objective No. 6, “To increase accession, retention, reclamation, and participation of children, youth, and young adults.” For more information, go to the website: IWillGo2020.org.

Mission Post

- Legend says Christianity was brought to Armenia by the apostles Thaddeus and Bartholomew. In 302 AD, Armenia became the first country to adopt Christianity as a state religion. Today, 97 percent of the country is Christian, and 93 percent of them belong to the Armenian Apostolic Church.

A Song to Sing

BELARUS | June 1

Viktor



Viktor was born with cerebral palsy in Belarus. His brain had not developed normally during pregnancy, and the congenital disorder would require long-term treatment, including physical therapy, medicine, and possibly surgery. The treatments might help, but doctors said his condition was incurable.

He also suffered from epileptic attacks.

The little boy received the diagnosis of “Invalid, First Group.” It was the most severe form of disability recognized by the country.

Viktor faced a grim future that seemed to grow bleaker when his mother abandoned him. He was sent to live at an orphanage.

Elsewhere in Belarus, a Seventh-day Adventist mother woke up one night to a baby’s cry in the hospital. She heard the cry, silence, and then the cry again. The cry tugged at her heartstrings. She got up to search for the baby. A nurse showed her little Daniil in the children’s ward and said he had been abandoned by his mother.

The mother felt compassion for the baby and called her husband in the morning.

“There’s a baby here,” she said. “Come and see him.”

He went to see him. The couple went to see the boy a second time. Then they started thinking about adopting him.

Father and Mother already had five daughters and one-year-old Daniil became their first son.

Before long, they started talking about adopting a second child. They learned that Daniil had a 5-year-old brother with cerebral palsy. They brought Viktor home from the orphanage and adopted him.

Viktor heard about God for the first time from his new family. He learned to read the Bible and pray. He went to church with his family every Sabbath.

As he grew older, he realized that he was a miracle from God. It was a miracle that he had a family and was even alive. He began to seek to fulfill God’s will in his life.

As the years passed, Viktor grew taller and stronger. But he still had the medical diagnosis of “Invalid, Group One.”

When he finished eighth grade, he didn’t have many options for continuing his education. The doctor gave him two options: He could learn to repair shoes or sell fruits and vegetables. His medical diagnosis prevented him from engaging in heavy labor and many other activities.

Viktor didn’t want to repair shoes or sell fresh produce. He prayed for God to intervene.

A short time later, God did in a most unexpected way. Doctors suddenly declared that he no longer had the diagnosis of “Invalid, Group One.” In fact, doctors said he was no longer disabled. He was tall, strong, and no longer had epileptic attacks. It was a miracle!

Father suggested that Viktor consider a career in music. He loved singing, and he often sang special music in church.

To Viktor’s joy, he was accepted into a music school. Before long, he was not only singing, but also learning how to compose music, write lyrics, and play the piano. Before long, he organized a concert of his own music.

Today, Viktor isn’t sure what will happen once he graduates from music school. But he would like to continue his education at the music school at Zaoksky Adventist University in Russia. In any case, he is not worried. He is sure that God has a plan. “‘For I know the plans I have for you,’ declares the Lord, ‘plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future’” (Jeremiah 29:11, NIV).

“What God has planned for me is a mystery, but I know that He will work out everything for the best,” he said. 🌍

Part of this quarter’s Thirteenth Sabbath Offering will help open a center of influence for young people in Minsk, Belarus.

By Andrew McChesney

Story Tips

- Show the location of Belarus on the map. Then show the location of Minsk, the capital, where part of this quarter’s Thirteenth Sabbath Offering will open a center of influence for youth.
- Pronounce Zaoksky as: za-OK-ski.
- Listen to Viktor sing, “Kindness” (Доброга) on YouTube: bit.ly/Viktor1-ESD.
- Listen to Viktor sing, “How Many Ways” (Сколько дорог), a song for which he also composed the music and lyrics, on YouTube: bit.ly/Viktor2-ESD.
- Download photos for this story from Facebook: bit.ly/fb-mq.
- Share Mission Posts and Fast Facts from the Euro-Asia Division: bit.ly/esd-2024.
- Know this mission story illustrates the following objectives of the Seventh-day Adventist Church’s “I Will Go” strategic plan: Spiritual Growth Objective No. 5, “To disciple individuals and families into Spirit-filled lives”; Spiritual Growth Objective No. 6, “To increase accession, retention, reclamation, and participation of children, youth, and young adults”; and Spiritual Growth Objective No. 7, “To help youth and young adults place God first and exemplify a biblical worldview.” For more information, go to the website: IWillGo2020.org.

Mission Post

- In 1901, the North Russian Missionary Field was organized. It included the territory of Belarus, where the first Adventists, helped by Adventist tracts and other literature, were converted.
- In the 1930s, Adventist pastors and church members in Belarus were convicted and deported to the Far North or to Siberia. Many members moved to remote villages to escape persecution, while others left the church.

Life-Changing Day

BELARUS | June 8

Vadim



Vadim was 14 when his mother and sister were killed in a car accident in Belarus.

After the heartbreaking loss, Father began to seek God. He attended Seventh-day Adventist evangelistic meetings and was baptized.

It was the 1990s, a golden time for evangelism in the former Soviet Union. The collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 had opened the door to religious freedom, and evangelistic meetings were being held across Belarus, Russia, and other former Soviet republics.

Vadim, then 15, said Father could do whatever he wished but he would never enter an Adventist church.

“I will not go to your church,” he declared.

Father didn’t say anything.

Four months later, he invited the boy to go with him to church on a Sabbath morning. Vadim, however, hadn’t changed his mind.

“I don’t want to go,” he said. “I won’t go.”

But Father wasn’t about to give up. He knew that while Vadim might not want to go to church, he did want something more than anything else in the world. The boy was learning computer programming at school, and he wanted to own a computer. Computers, however, were prohibitively expensive in Belarus at the time.

Father said he knew an Adventist woman at church who owned her own computer.

“We could ask her how she bought it,” he said.

Vadim went to church.

He found to his surprise that church members met in the home of a grandmother, and they gathered around a large table to worship.

After arriving, Vadim whispered to Father, “Where is the woman with the computer? I want to talk to her.”

Father whispered back, “Let’s talk to her after the worship service.”

Vadim had not planned to stay for the whole service. He had hoped to meet the woman and leave.

As he sat through Sabbath School and the divine worship service, he heard people sing hymns for the first time. He saw people pray on their knees for the first time. When the preacher spoke, he heard for the first time about the special friendship between David and Jonathan.

By the time that the worship service finished, Vadim had completely forgotten about his reason for coming to church. He no longer wanted to talk to the woman with the computer. His heart had been touched by all that he had seen and heard.

After that Sabbath, he came to church every Sabbath. He began to keep the Sabbath. He read through the Bible and the *Conflict of the Ages* series by Ellen White. He became a new person.

One worship service changed his life. He had come to church to learn how to buy a computer and had left with a new life.

A year later, when he was 16, he gave his heart to Jesus in baptism.

The next year, he went to Zaoksky Adventist University in Russia to study to become a pastor.

Today, Vadim Derkach is a pastor and a leader of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Belarus. He serves as executive secretary of the Belarus Union of Churches Conference.

Whatever became of his desire to own a computer?

He said with a smile, “I did buy a computer — but later on.” 🌐

Part of this quarter’s Thirteenth Sabbath Offering will help open a center of influence for young people, which Vadim will help set up, in Minsk, Belarus. Thank you for planning a generous offering on June 29.

By Andrew McChesney

Story Tips

- Show the location of Belarus on the map. Then show the location of Minsk, the capital, where part of this quarter’s Thirteenth Sabbath Offering will open a center of influence for youth.
- Pronounce Zaoksky as: za-OK-ski.
- Download photos for this story from Facebook: bit.ly/fb-mq.
- Share Mission Posts and Fast Facts from the Euro-Asia Division: bit.ly/esd-2024.
- Know this mission story illustrates the following objectives of the Seventh-day Adventist Church’s “I Will Go” strategic plan: Spiritual Growth Objective No. 5, “To disciple individuals and families into Spirit-filled lives”; Spiritual Growth Objective No. 6, “To increase accession, retention, reclamation, and participation of children, youth, and young adults”; and Spiritual Growth Objective No. 7, “To help youth and young adults place God first and exemplify a biblical worldview.” For more information, go to the website: IWillGo2020.org.

Fast Facts

- About 40 percent of Belarus is covered by forest.
- The European bison, Europe’s largest land mammal, can be found in Belarus, and it is Belarus’ national animal.
- There have been five Nobel prize winners from Belarus: Simon Kuznets for Economics in 1971; Menachem Begin for Peace in 1978; Shimon Peres for Peace in 1994; Zhores Alferov for Physics in 2000; and Svetlana Alexievich for Literature in 2015.
- Typical Belarussian dishes include apples, beets, pears, peas, plums, and especially potatoes.

'Tis the Season to Witness

RUSSIA | June 15

Alina



One of Alina's favorite parts of being a student at Zaoksky Christian School in Russia is the annual Christmas program.

Every year, the school's 210 children have an opportunity to participate in a play about Christ's birth for hundreds of children from their town of Zaoksky and beyond. The children who attend the Christmas program also learn how to make various crafts and go home with gifts of candy. It is a mission outreach program aimed at touching hearts with the love of Jesus.

Everyone eagerly waits for the Christmas program, a Zaoksky tradition since 2003. Schoolchildren wait to participate in the program. Children in the town wait to go to the program. Parents and others also look forward to the big event.

Alina began participating in the program when she was 11. She wasn't even a student at Zaoksky Christian School yet. But she wanted to take part, so she helped set up the Christmas tree.

For five years in a row, Alina participated in the program. But when the sixth year came, she wasn't sure whether she would be able to participate. She was ill. She worried that she wouldn't be strong enough to go. She prayed, "Give me strength so I can glorify Your name at the upcoming program."

Her stress levels grew as the opening date drew closer. She worried that she would not be able to take part.

But when the big day came, she felt perfectly well. The first day also went perfectly well. She enjoyed seeing the smiles of children and adults as they thanked her and other schoolchildren from Zaoksky Christian School who had participated.

Then a family with four children came up to her. They wanted to take a selfie. She agreed.

Afterward, the mother asked, "Why do you do this program and spend so much time and money on strangers?"

Alina stood silently for a while. She

thought about how to respond. Why had she wanted to participate in the program for the past six years? Finally, she spoke. “Every person who really loves God also really loves his or her neighbor, and wants to share God’s love by doing good deeds,” she said.

The Alina spoke with the family for a long time. She told them about Zaoksky Christian School and the Seventh-day Adventist Church. She told them about the Pathfinder and Adventurer clubs at her church and invited the children to attend.

The parents brought their boys, who were Pathfinder age, to the next Pathfinder meeting. The boys attended a second meeting, but they didn’t return after that.

Alina doesn’t know what happened to the family, and she doesn’t know how to contact them. But she isn’t worried. She is sure that a seed has been planted in their hearts. She trusts that God will grow the seed and draw their hearts to Him. After all, the apostle Paul said, “I planted ... but God gave the increase” (1 Corinthians 3:6, NKJV). Her part only was to introduce the family to God.

“This was my first time to witness for God on my own,” Alina said. “It was so nice that God gave me the strength to be well and to talk to them. I am so happy that I could show His love to others.”

Alina added that she learned that it is important not to be scared to talk about God.

“Even when our strength fails us, God is near and gives us strength,” she said. “We need to believe in Him.” 🌍

Thank you for your Thirteenth Sabbath Offering three years ago that went to help construct a new school building for Zaoksky Christian School in Zaoksky, Russia. Part of this quarter’s offering will help open a spiritual and social center in Salekhard in the Russian Far North. Thank you for planning a generous offering on June 29.

By Andrew McChesney

Story Tips

- Show Russia on the map. Then show Zaoksky, 80 miles (130 km) south of Moscow. Zaoksky is the location of Zaoksky Christian School, which received part of a 2021 Thirteenth Sabbath Offering to construct a new school building. Also show Salekhard, in the Russian Far North, which will receive part of this quarter’s Thirteenth Sabbath Offering to open a spiritual and social center.
- Pronounce Alina as: a-LEEN-a.
- Pronounce Zaoksky as: za-OK-ski.
- Download photos for this story from Facebook: bit.ly/fb-mq.
- Share Mission Posts and Fast Facts from the Euro-Asia Division: bit.ly/esd-2024.
- Know this mission story illustrates the following objectives of the Seventh-day Adventist Church’s “I Will Go” strategic plan: Spiritual Growth Objective No. 5, “To disciple individuals and families into Spirit-filled lives”; Spiritual Growth Objective No. 6, “To increase accession, retention, reclamation, and participation of children, youth, and young adults”; and Spiritual Growth Objective No. 7, “To help youth and young adults place God first and exemplify a biblical worldview.” For more information, go to the website: IWillGo2020.org.

Mission Post

- The very first Adventist mission work in the Russian Empire took place in Crimea when Russian emigrants sent Adventist literature from the United States back to their homeland. The first Adventist church was organized in 1886.
- The first Adventist missionary to Russia was L.R. Conradi, who arrived in 1886 from Germany. He was arrested for “heresy” at his first baptismal service.

School of Miracles



RUSSIA | June 22

Ruvim

For Ruvim, Zaoksky Christian School is a school of miracles.

The Seventh-day Adventist elementary school and high school, which is located on the campus of Zaoksky Adventist University in Russia, received part of the Thirteenth Sabbath Offering three years ago. The funds are being used to construct a new school building, so the school can move out of its classrooms in a cramped university building.

But for Ruvim, the school is more than a Thirteenth Sabbath miracle.

Long before the offering was collected, he and his wife, Alyona, came to visit Zaoksky, the town where the school is located. The young couple didn't have any children, but Alyona had friends whose children studied at Zaoksky Christian School. She was impressed with the good influence that the school was having on their lives.

"It would be great if we had children and they could study at Zaoksky," she said.

Ruvim agreed. There were no Seventh-day Adventist schools where he served as a pastor in southern Russia.

A dream was planted in their hearts. But the dream seemed impossible, and they soon forgot it.

Six years passed, and Ruvim received a call from the principal of Zaoksky Christian School. The school needed a chaplain. Would he move with his family to the school?

Ruvim immediately remembered the dream that had seemed so far out of reach. He and Alyona now had three sons, and they moved their family to Zaoksky just in time for their oldest son to start first grade.

For Ruvim, it was a miracle. His son was able to go to an Adventist school.

Two weeks after the start of the school year, Ruvim opened an evening group where children could study the Bible. Attendance was not mandatory, but children could receive extra credit for participating.

Six of the school's 210 students showed up for the first 45-minute Bible study on a Thursday evening. The boys and girls gathered in a circle in a classroom.

Ruvim led the study of one of the Adventist Church's doctrines. He asked questions, and the children opened their Bibles to find the answers. Afterward, Ruvim emailed them copies of the lesson to fill out at home and send back to him to check.

The Bible study group grew as other children heard about it. Among those who joined was a teenage boy who was addicted to vaping. Teachers had warned him that he faced expulsion if he didn't quit. He came to the Bible study group on his own initiative.

As he studied, he managed to quit vaping, and he became one of the most active and earnest boys in the group.

At the end of the semester, five children from the group gave their hearts to Jesus. Ruvim watched with joy as the four girls and one boy were baptized.

For him, it was another miracle at Zaoksky Christian School.

The Bible study group grew the next semester as seven more children joined. Currently, eight children, ages 13 to 16, are preparing for baptism.

For Ruvim, it was the latest miracle at the school. He was happy beyond words.

"I'm glad that God brought me to Zaoksky to be a living instrument in His hands," he said. 🌍

Thank you for your Thirteenth Sabbath Offering three years ago that went to help construct a new school building for Zaoksky Christian School in Zaoksky, Russia. Part of this quarter's offering will help open a spiritual and social center in Salekhard in the Russian Far North. Thank you for planning a generous offering next Sabbath on June 29.

By Andrew McChesney

Story Tips

- Show Russia on the map. Then show Zaoksky, 80 miles (130 km) south of Moscow. Zaoksky is the location of Zaoksky Christian School, which received part of a 2021 Thirteenth Sabbath Offering to construct a new school building. Also show Salekhard, in the Russian Far North, which will receive part of this quarter's Thirteenth Sabbath Offering.
- Pronounce Ruvim as: roo-VEEM.
- Pronounce Zaoksky as: za-OK-ski.
- Pronounce Alyona as: al-YO-na.
- Download photos for this story from Facebook: bit.ly/fb-mq.
- Share Mission Posts and Fast Facts from the Euro-Asia Division: bit.ly/esd-2024.
- Know this mission story illustrates the following objectives of the Seventh-day Adventist Church's "I Will Go" strategic plan: Spiritual Growth Objective No. 5, "To disciple individuals and families into Spirit-filled lives"; Spiritual Growth Objective No. 6, "To increase accession, retention, reclamation, and participation of children, youth, and young adults"; and Spiritual Growth Objective No. 7, "To help youth and young adults place God first and exemplify a biblical worldview." For more information, go to the website: IWillGo2020.org.

Mission Post

- The Russian Mission was the first Adventist Russian church unit, established in 1890.
- Today, Russia has 451 churches, 331 companies, and 31,517 members. In a population of 120,510,000, that's one Adventist for every 3,824 people.

Voice From Nowhere

13th SABBATH | June 29

Liliya



Liliya didn't believe in God. She didn't even think about faith. She grew up in a country where no one seemed to believe in God or think about faith. She lived in the Soviet Union.

So, it came as quite a surprise to her when a voice spoke to her out of nowhere.

Liliya was 23 and home alone in Tashkent, the capital of the Soviet republic of Uzbekistan. Her husband, Yury, was away.

She had been worrying day and night about family problems. Now she was worrying again, and the thought popped into her mind, "We need to move."

"Yes," she agreed out loud. "We need to move."

At that moment, she felt a soft touch on her shoulder. A soft voice said, "That's exactly right!"

Liliya instinctively looked around the room. But she was alone, and she saw no one. The voice was so kind that she wasn't scared. She accepted it as confirmation that she and Yury needed to move.

When Yury returned home, Liliya

informed him that it was time to move.

The couple ended up moving far away to the Soviet Far North, right on the Arctic Circle.

In such a remote place, there was little to do except work and talk to neighbors. Liliya and Yury worked and talked to neighbors, and soon they became close friends with another married couple, Lyuba and Valentin.

Years passed, and their friendship grew. Then the Soviet Union collapsed, and Lyuba and Valentin moved away. But the two couples remained in touch. Lyuba became interested in the Bible, and she shared what she was learning with Liliya.

First, she said questions rose in her mind about which day of the week was God's true Sabbath. She went to a priest for answers, but he couldn't show her in the Bible that Sunday was God's true Sabbath. So, she prayed to God in desperation, "If You are real, reveal Yourself to me. I want to know You."

A short time later, she saw a homemade sign offering Bible studies at a bus stop. She went to the address and found a group of Seventh-day Adventists. Her questions about which day was God's true Sabbath were answered from the Bible, and she gave her heart to Jesus in baptism.

Lyuba excitedly told Liliya about her new faith.

Liliya readily accepted the Bible truths

that Lyuba shared. But she had no faith of her own. She didn't know God, and she saw no reason to follow Him or keep the Sabbath.

Then Lyuba and her husband lost their jobs and fell on hard times. Liliya wondered if she might have made a mistake in heeding the soft voice and leaving Uzbekistan.

One day, she complained about her life to a stranger on the street. The next day, the stranger, a woman named Nadya, came to her house with a bag filled with home-grown potatoes and carrots. Liliya was astonished and, to thank her, bought some groceries with her scant funds and took them to Nadya's house.

A deep friendship formed, and Liliya was surprised to learn that Nadya's life was more difficult than her own. Nadya's husband had died a month earlier, leaving her with 10 children to feed and raise. Yet Nadya was filled with peace and joy. Liliya learned that Nadya was a Seventh-day Adventist.

Now Liliya knew two Seventh-day Adventists: Lyuba and Nadya.

Nadya gave a Bible to Liliya, and Liliya began to read it.

Meanwhile, Lyuba kept in touch about her own spiritual journey, and she sent a Bible as well.

Now Liliya had two Bibles. She found the Bible stories fascinating. But she had no faith of her own. She didn't know God.

Then Lyuba made a special trip to see Liliya. She took her to a newly opened Adventist church in the town, and Liliya started attending every Sabbath.

By this time, Liliya had grown old and was a grandmother. She enjoyed the Sabbath sermons and fellowship. But she had no faith of her own. She didn't know God.

Then tragedy struck.

Liliya's daughter lost a baby shortly before birth. Then she lost a second child while pregnant. After that, she got pregnant again and began to face complications. Liliya couldn't keep silent. She cried out loud, "Lord, save this child! Don't let him die." Then she made a vow, saying, "I will accept

Story Tips

- Show Salekhard on the map.
- Pronounce Salekhard as: SAL-e-hard.
- Know that Salekhard is the only city in the world located on the Arctic Circle. The city was founded in 1595 and has a population of about 50,000.
- Know that Liliya is holding one of her two Bibles in the photo.
- Download photos for this story from Facebook: bit.ly/fb-mq.
- Share Mission Posts and Fast Facts from the Euro-Asia Division: bit.ly/esd-2024.
- This mission story illustrates Spiritual Growth Objective No. 5 of the Seventh-day Adventist Church's "I Will Go" strategic plan: "To disciple individuals and families into spirit-filled lives." For more information, go to the website: IWillGo2020.org.

Before 13th Sabbath

- Remind everyone that their mission offerings are gifts to spread God's Word around the world and that one-fourth of our Thirteenth Sabbath Offering will help five projects in the Euro-Asia Division. The projects are listed on page 3 and on the back cover.
- The narrator doesn't need to memorize the story, but he or she should be familiar enough with the material so as not to have to read it. Alternatively, children and adults can act out the story.
- Before or after the story, use a map to show the countries in the Euro-Asia Division — Armenia, Belarus, Georgia, Russia, and Uzbekistan — that will receive the Thirteenth Sabbath Offering. You can download a mission map with the projects on Facebook at bit.ly/fb-mq.

You and give You my heart in baptism if You save this child.”

Several months later, a healthy baby boy named Stepan was born. Liliya kept her word. She was baptized six months later.

Today, Liliya has faith of her own. She knows God. She believes that a voice from heaven encouraged her to leave Uzbekistan. Because she moved, she met her Adventist friends Lyuba and Nadya. Because she moved, she received two Bibles and began to read them. Because she moved, she found faith and God. Twenty-six years passed from the day when she heard the soft voice in Uzbekistan to the day she was baptized in the Russian Far North.

Today, Liliya is 69 years old. She goes to church every Sabbath with her daughter, who is named Lyuba, and 10-year-old grandson Stepan. She is praying that her husband and other relatives will have faith and believe in God one day. She has faith that they will. She knows God, and she knows that He hears her prayers. 🌍

Part of today’s Thirteenth Sabbath Offering will help open a spiritual and social center in Liliya’s hometown of Salekhard in the Russian Far North. The offering also will help four other projects in the Euro-Asia Division, including a center of influence where families can learn about God in Yerevan, Armenia; a center of influence for youth in Minsk, Belarus; a health center in Tskaltubo,

Fast Facts

- Russia is the world’s largest country, occupying more than one-tenth of all the land on Earth. It spans 11 time zones, across two continents (Asia and Europe) and has shores on three oceans (the Arctic, Atlantic, and Pacific Oceans).
- Russia’s most famous animal is the Siberian tiger, the largest cat in the world. It can grow to more than 10 feet (3 m) long and weigh 660 pounds (300 kg).
- A traditional Russian dish known the world over is borsch, a beet soup made with beets, cabbage, carrots, onions, potatoes, and sour cream, common ingredients found in Russian food.
- Famous Russians include Marc Chagall, modernist painter; Anton Chekhov, playwright; Mikhail Baryshnikov, ballet dancer; Pyotr Tchaikovsky, composer; Garry Kasparov, chess player; and Mikhail Gorbachev, politician.

Georgia; and the first Adventist elementary school in Tashkent, Uzbekistan. Thank you for your generous offering today that will help spread the gospel in the Euro-Asia Division.

By Andrew McChesney

Future 13th Sabbath Projects

The Thirteenth Sabbath Offering next quarter will support six projects in the Inter-American Division:

- Center of influence for troubled children, Buenaventura, Colombia
- Center of influence for troubled children, Puerto Tejada, Colombia
- Center of influence for troubled children, Limón province, Costa Rica
- Ebenezer Elementary School, Roseau, Dominica
- Center of influence to reach upper class, Xalapa, Mexico
- Center of influence to reach upper class, Oaxaca, Mexico

Leader's Resources

Be sure to download your free Mission Spotlight video, featuring video reports from around the Euro-Asia Division and beyond. Download or stream from the Adventist Mission website at bit.ly/missionspotlight.

Online Information

Following are sources of information that may be helpful in preparing for the mission segment of Sabbath School. For more information on the cultures and history of the countries featured in this quarterly, visit:

Websites

Armenia: government website	www.gov.am/en/
Armenia Travel	bit.ly/ArmeniaTravel
National Geographic	bit.ly/Armenia_NatGeo
Belarus: government website	bit.ly/BelarusGovt
Belarus Travel	bit.ly/BelarusTrav
World Travel Guide	bit.ly/WorldTravGuide
Georgia: government website	bit.ly/GeorgiaGovt
Georgia Travel	bit.ly/Georgia_Travel
Lonely Planet	bit.ly/LP_Georgia
Russia: government website	bit.ly/RussiaGovt
Lonely Planet	bit.ly/LP_Russia
WikiVoyage	bit.ly/WV_Russia
Uzbekistan: government website	www.gov.uz/en
Condé Nast	bit.ly/CN_Uzbekistan
National Geographic	bit.ly/NatGeo_Uzbekistan

Seventh-day Adventist

Euro-Asia Division	bit.ly/SDA_ESD
Armenian Field	bit.ly/SDA_ArmField
Belarus Union of Churches Conference	bit.ly/SDA_BUCC
West Russian Union Conference	bit.ly/SDA_WRUC
Zaoksky Adventist University	bit.ly/SDA_ZAU

An offering goal device will help focus attention on world missions and increase weekly mission giving. Determine a goal for your class's weekly mission offering. Multiply it by 14, allowing a double goal for the Thirteenth Sabbath Offering, which will be collected on June 29. Remind church members that their regular weekly mission offerings help the missionary work of the world church, and that one-quarter of the Thirteenth Sabbath Offering will go directly to the projects in the Euro-Asia Division. On June 22, report on mission giving during the quarter. Encourage church members to double or triple their normal mission giving on the upcoming Thirteenth Sabbath. Count the offering and record the amount given at the end of Sabbath School.

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YOUTH & ADULT MISSION

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Russian Federation

EURO-ASIA DIVISION

UNION	CHURCHES	COMPANIES	MEMBERSHIP	POPULATION
Belarus	66	28	3,706	9,318,000
Caucasus	133	59	7,352	27,298,762
East-Russian	80	39	4,815	23,205,089
Far Eastern	51	18	1,995	6,289,645
Moldova	134	99	8,274	3,515,000
Southern	67	42	3,916	116,251,000
West Russian	371	292	26,702	97,304,504
ATTACHED FIELDS				
Armenian Field	19	11	820	2,965,000
Crimea Mission	25	6	1,604	1,901,000
Georgian Field	8	4	338	3,702,000
TOTALS	954	598	59,522	291,750,000

PROJECTS

- 1** Center of influence for youth, Minsk, Belarus
- 2** Health center, Tskaltubo, Georgia
- 3** Center of influence for families, Yerevan, Armenia
- 4** Spiritual and social center, Salekhard, Russia
- 5** Elementary school, Tashkent, Uzbekistan

