



YOUTH & ADULT
MISSION

2021 • **QUARTER 1** • EURO-ASIA DIVISION



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On the Cover: Olga Noshin, 34, survived a terrible car crash without a scratch, forever changing her marriage and her walk with God in Zaoksky, Russia. Story, page 14.


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 = stories of special interest to teens

*A "veiled country" is a country that Adventist Mission has chosen not to identify because of regional sensitivities involving Christianity.

Your Offerings at Work



Your Thirteenth Sabbath Offering three years ago helped construct this gym at South Union Adventist College in Tokmok, Kyrgyzstan. Read stories from the school on pages 22-25.



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Dear Sabbath School Leader,

Andrew McChesney
Editor



A remarkable story is unfolding across the Euro-Asia Division, where the number of church schools has surged from 14 in 2012 to more than 50 today.

“There are many reasons why schools are opening quickly now, but one of the main reasons is it is the right time and the right place for God to fulfill His plans,” Mikhail Kaminskiy told me during his 2015-20 term as president of the Euro-Asia Division.

Your Thirteenth Sabbath Offering will make a big difference to Adventist education by helping two schools construct their own buildings on the campuses of Zaoksky Adventist University in Russia and the Ukrainian Adventist Center of Higher Education, a college located outside Ukraine’s capital, Kyiv. Currently the combined elementary schools and high schools borrow classroom space from the Russian university and Ukrainian college.

The Adventist Church established the

first Protestant seminary in the Soviet Union when the institution now known as Zaoksky Adventist University opened outside Moscow in 1988. But compared with other parts of the world, Adventist schools got a slow start in the vast territory of the Euro-Asia Division, partly because of the seven decades of Soviet rule. Brave Adventists who surreptitiously translated church cofounder Ellen White’s writings into Russian intentionally omitted her advice to open church schools over fears of needlessly provoking the authorities.

As a result, it was only after the 1991 Soviet collapse that church members began to read White’s counsel such as: “In all our churches, and wherever there is a company of believers, church schools should be established: and in these schools there should be teachers who have the true missionary spirit for the children are to be trained to become missionaries” (The Southern Review, July 18, 1899). The first elementary school was opened in 1990 at Zaoksky.

The Euro-Asia Division is home to 330.4 million people, including 107,252 Adventists in 13 countries. That’s a ratio of one Adventist for 3,080 people.

You can download PDFs of the youth and adult Mission magazine at bit.ly/adultmission and the Children’s Mission magazine at bit.ly/childrensmission.

If I can be of assistance, contact me at mcchesney@gc.adventist.org.

Thank you for encouraging your church to be mission-minded! 🌍

Opportunities

The Thirteenth Sabbath Offering this quarter will help the Euro-Asia Division to:

- Construct three-story preschool, elementary school, and high school on the campus of Ukrainian Adventist Center of Higher Education in Bucha, Ukraine
- Construct two-story preschool, elementary school, and high school on the campus of Zaoksky Adventist University in Tula region, Russia

Memory Stick Controversy

RUSSIA | January 2

Alyona Pirozhok, 20



Alyona wanted to return to Zaoksky Adventist University when the lights went out and the heat stopped working during a cold, winter bus trip.

The other students in her singing group felt the same way. They were tired, and they didn't know whether the bus could be fixed. The bus with ten people was five hours into a 12-hour trip from Zaoksky, Russia, to Minsk, Belarus.

The students decided to call Alyona's father back at the university to see whether he could help. Alyona's father, who knew a lot about fixing cars and buses, told them to wait at the next filling station and he would drive over to take a look.

The students waited four hours for Alyona's father to arrive. Then they waited another two hours as he fixed the bus. While they waited, they spoke with a tall, muscular man who worked at the

filling station. The man was very kind and gave them unlimited cups of free herbal tea to drink as they waited.

Finally, the bus was fixed and ready to go. The students boarded the vehicle, thanked Alyona's father for his assistance, and resumed the trip to Minsk.

About an hour later, Alyona suddenly felt a strong desire to return to the filling station. She wanted to give the kind worker a memory stick with Ellen White's "The Great Controversy." The memory stick was a witnessing tool that she and her friends liked to give strangers.

"We need to return to the gas station," she announced.

The group groaned.

"We should give a memory stick to that man," she persisted.

"Yes, we should have given him a memory stick," said a student, Nikita. "But we're not going to go back."

The students discussed the dilemma for 10 minutes. They wanted to give the memory stick to the kind worker, but it didn't seem like a good use of time to turn around. Nikita was the most adamant in insisting that they keep driving to Belarus.

Suddenly, Nikita changed his mind.

"We have to go back," he said.

"Why!" everyone exclaimed in unison.

Nikita looked embarrassed.

“I forgot my cell phone at the filling station,” he said, hanging his head.

The bus turned around. Everyone onboard was happy. Alyona was especially happy. They wanted to witness to the worker. But then Nikita remembered that he was big and muscular. “Maybe he won’t take the memory stick,” he said. “He obviously isn’t a Christian, and we saw that he was smoking while we waited.”

For the next hour, the students debated whether the worker would accept the gift. As the bus drew near to the filling station, Alyona prayed for the group. “Dear Jesus, please open the worker’s heart so he will accept the memory stick and read the information on it,” she said.

As the bus pulled up to the filling station, the worker stepped out of the building. In his hand was Nikita’s cell phone. He had been waiting.

Alyona went up to the man. She felt shy and small next to him, but she pulled out the memory stick.

“Please take this,” she said. “We are Christians and believe in Jesus. We want to give this gift to you. Maybe it will help you in your life.”

All the students looked at the man. Would he take the memory stick?

The man’s lips spread into a large smile. His face positively beamed.

“Thank you so much!” he said. “I will definitely take a look at the memory stick.”

Alyona doesn’t know whether the man kept his promise, but she isn’t worried. Whether he was convicted to read “The Great Controversy” was the work of the Holy Spirit. The students’ part was only to share the memory stick.

“There is no reason to be afraid about sharing Jesus,” Alyona said. “We

Story Tips

- Find Zaoksky, Russia, on the map. It is south of Moscow. Show the route to Minsk, Belarus.
- Watch Alyona on YouTube: bit.ly/Alyona-ESD.
- Download photos on Facebook (bit.ly/fb-mq).
- Download ESD Mission Posts and Fast Facts at: bit.ly/2021-ESD.

Mission Post

- The Russian Federation is comprised of the West Russian Union Conference, with seven conferences; the East Russian Union Mission, with three missions; the Caucasus Union Mission, with two conferences and a mission; and the Far Eastern Union of Churches Mission.
- There are 640 churches and 719 companies in Russia, with 42,466 members. With a population of 154,842,000, there are 3,646 people for each church member.

underestimate the power of the Holy Spirit. He is very powerful. People also are kinder than we think, and they actually want to know about Jesus.” 🌐

This quarter’s Thirteenth Sabbath Offering will help Zaoksky Christian School, where Alyona attended grade school and high school, construct its own school building on the campus of Zaoksky Adventist University. Currently the school borrows classrooms from the university, and your offering will help the children meet in their own classrooms.

By Andrew McChesney

Gift of Tongues

Anatoly Golovizin, 28



Anatoly promised God to work as a pastor after being healed of a long illness in Kazakhstan, but he didn't have any hope of entering the seminary. He came from a poor family in an impoverished village, and he had no money. Reluctantly, Anatoly moved to Russia to work.

"God what do you want from me?" he prayed daily.

As he prayed, he sensed God answer, "Study to be a language interpreter."

Anatoly laughed. He wasn't a good student. Moreover, everyone in his family worked as engineers. No one knew any foreign languages. Unable to forget the idea of taking language classes, he returned to his mother in Ushtobe, Kazakhstan.

"Mother, I want to study to become an interpreter," he said.

Mother was surprised. "Son, you only know Russian and Kazakh," she said.

"That kind of work is not for you."

The idea persisted in Anatoly's mind,

and Mother agreed to go with him to Taldikurga, the nearest city with a college that offered English classes. Anatoly failed the entrance exam, and he and Mother sadly returned home.

But Anatoly couldn't forget the idea. One day, he was reading the Bible under a tree and he realized for the first time that the ability to speak various languages is a gift from the Holy Spirit. He read, "For to one is given the word of wisdom through the Spirit, to another the word of knowledge through the same Spirit, ... to another different kinds of tongues, [and] to another the interpretation of tongues" (1 Corinthians 12:8, 10).

Anatoly bowed his head and prayed, "God, please give me this gift."

A month later, he was walking along train tracks and found a conversational English textbook on the ground. Back at home, he opened the book and read simple phrases in English and Russian. After reading two pages, he closed the book and pondered what he had just read. He remembered every word that he had just read in English. Stunned, he repeated every English word again and again in his mind.

"This is impossible," he thought. "This is some kind of fantasy."

He opened the book and read 10 more pages. Closing the book, he gave it to Mother. “Mother, read anything from this book in Russian,” he said.

She read several phrases, and Anatoly interpreted them into English. With shock, he wondered whether he had received the gift of tongues that he had prayed for.

Anatoly entered an English course in his hometown and in two months reached the intermediate level. Then he went to harvest watermelons. With the money, he bought his first laptop. He harvested more watermelons and used the money to get the Internet and a cellphone. With the new possessions, he learned more English online.

The next year he enrolled in the college where he had failed the entrance exam. This time, he received a perfect score. His English was so good that the college sent him to a national contest. The college president, who had been scolding Anatoly for missing Saturday classes, changed his mind when he placed second and won U.S.\$200 in the national contest.

“Go to church!” the president said. “In fact, I’ll go with you.” And he did.

Anatoly graduated with honors in two languages, English and Turkish.

He didn’t stop with Russian, Kazakh, English, and Turkish. He learned Spanish while studying for four months at an Adventist school in Kyrgyzstan. Then church leaders sent him to Argentina to fine-tune his Spanish, and there he learned Portuguese. When he returned, he worked as an interpreter and language teacher for the Adventist Church in Kazakhstan for three years. Then his dream came true. Nine years after promising God to serve as a pastor, he was

Story Tips

- Show Zaoksky, Russia, on the map. It is south of Moscow. Also show Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Argentina on the map.
- Download photos on Facebook (bit.ly/fb-mq).
- Download ESD Mission Posts and Fast Facts at: bit.ly/2021-ESD.

sent to Zaoksky Adventist University.

Anatoly firmly believes that the gift of tongues and other gifts of the Spirit were not only for the early Christian church in Acts.

“God is the same today as He was yesterday,” he said. “If we ask for His gifts, He will give them to us. Why don’t we have gifts of the Spirit? It is simply because we don’t ask.”

A friend once told Anatoly that he had never received a gift of the Spirit. Anatoly asked him if he had ever asked. He looked at Anatoly with surprise. “No, I have never asked,” he said.

Anatoly plans to return to Kazakhstan and serve God as a pastor after graduation.

“Imagine, a poor Kazakh boy speaking so many languages,” Anatoly said. “God is great!” 🌍

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By Andrew McChesney



A New Person

Andrei Abramyan, 22

When I was 15, I spent the summer training to be a boxer. One day, as I traveled home from training, the thought popped into my mind, “You’re sick.”

I shrugged off the thought. At home, though, I began to feel depressed. I asked my parents to take me to a therapist. But then I realized that I might be expelled from school if people thought I was mentally ill. I didn’t go for counseling.

Two weeks later, another frightening thought popped into my mind: “You will die in a month.”

I felt worse and worse. Life lost all meaning. Everyone thought that I was seeking attention, but I was in deep pain and no one believed me. I didn’t understand what was happening.

At the end of the month, Grandmother gave me a haircut in our home. As she cut my hair, I wept.

“It’s OK,” said Grandmother, who thought I was going through some

hormonal changes. “I’ll just finish cutting your hair.”

“I’m dying,” I said.

Grandmother thought that I was seeking attention. I actually wanted to commit suicide, but I couldn’t do it. After Grandmother finished cutting my hair, she sat down. Mother was sitting nearby. I remained in the chair. Looking up to the ceiling, I prayed silently, “God, if You exist, help me.”

Nothing happened.

I felt a strong desire to go to the bathroom and kill myself.

At that moment, I saw a light come down from the ceiling like a bolt of lightning. It went into my chest. I cannot describe how it felt. It was pleasant. I felt eternity in me. It happened in a split second.

I jumped up from the chair and exclaimed, “Praise God! God healed me!”

Mother and Grandmother hadn’t

seen the light, and they looked at me with concern.

“Calm down,” Grandmother said. “Everything will be OK.”

Elatedly, I hugged my mother. It was like I hadn’t seen her in weeks.

“God healed me,” I said.

I found my twin brother, Vadim, playing on the computer. I told him about the light. “God healed me,” I said.

He didn’t believe me. He thought I was making up a story.

Grandmother thought that I was mentally ill.

I understood that I had nearly killed myself, but Someone had saved me. At that moment I realized that God exists.

That day began a long journey toward Jesus.

Today I am studying to be a pastor at Zaoksky Adventist University. My family is happy for me. They say I am a new person.

I believe that God brought healing into my life, and I have not been the same since. I cried out to Him, and He heard me. I praise Him for being a God who hears and answers prayers. 🌐

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By Andrei Abramyan, as told to Andrew McChesney

Story Tips

- Ask a man, preferably a young adult, to share this first-person testimony.
- Download photos on Facebook (bit.ly/fb-mq).
- Download ESD Mission Posts and Fast Facts at: bit.ly/2021-ESD.

Mission Post

- Adventism in Russia began as a lay missionary movement by German colonists who had emigrated from Russia to America in the 1870s. After being converted to Seventh-day Adventism, they began to send Adventist publications in the German language to their friends and family in Russia.
- In the “purgings” of the early 1930s many Adventist ministers and church members in Russia were arrested and exiled, often without any actual charges being made against them. The remaining ministers were denied full civil rights and were not allotted food rations, and their children were not allowed into schools. In addition, the ministers had to pay a special “professional tax,” which often exceeded their income, forcing them to leave the work.

Fast Facts

- Russia spans eleven time zones.
- Russia paved the way in space travel. Although the U.S., in 1969, was the first country to put a man on the moon, the Soviets had launched the first orbiting satellite in 1957 and made the first human trip into space in 1961. Other accomplishments included the first spacewalk, the first spacecrafts to land on the moon, Venus, and Mars, and the launch of the first space stations.

Making Friends With God

RUSSIA | January 23

Masha, 17



When Masha was 5, her older sister got baptized in the Siberian city of Novokuznetsk in Russia.

Masha watched intently as her sister went down into the water in the baptismal tank. She heard the pastor and other church members congratulate her afterward. She thought that the baptism was a wonderful occasion — and she pondered it for a whole year.

When she was 6, she decided that she was old enough to be baptized.

“I want to get baptized,” she announced to her mother.

But then she got to thinking. Maybe 6 was too young to be baptized. Ten sounded like a better age. Masha decided to wait until she was 10.

The years passed. As her 10th birthday approached, Masha remembered her decision and approached the church pastor. “I want to get baptized,” she said.

The pastor was pleased with her decision and invited her to join a baptismal class with eight older children. The class was very interesting. But after a year, when Masha was 11, the pastor was transferred to another church. The new pastor refused to baptize her. “I’m sorry, but you are too young,” he said.

Masha felt keenly disappointed. She didn’t talk to the new pastor for a while.

When she was 12, she decided to ask him again whether she could be baptized. The pastor agreed and invited her to join his baptismal class. Masha attended for four months. But for some reason the class didn’t seem interesting anymore. All she could think about was how long she had wanted to be baptized and how the pastor had refused to baptize her. She dropped out of the baptismal class and considered leaving the church.

Outside church, Masha didn’t enjoy her school or her life. She didn’t have many friends. The future seemed dreary.

One day Mother asked Masha whether she would like to go to Zaosky Christian School, a Seventh-day Adventist day and boarding school. Masha wanted a new

start with new people, so she agreed to go.

The summer before school started, she finally was baptized. At summer camp she noticed that she seemed to be the only teen who wasn't baptized. She was baptized at 16. But life didn't change after baptism. She was the same person.

The first few weeks at Zaoksky were lonely. Masha wasn't sure how to make friends. She felt sad. A theology student at Zaoksky University, which is on the same campus, noticed her loneliness and befriended her. "God knows our needs," he said. "He is nearby, and we can talk to Him like a friend."

Masha didn't have many close friends, and she decided to try to talk to God. Finding a quiet place, she poured out her heart to God.

"Forgive me for not talking to You for such a long time," she said, weeping. "I'm sorry for not getting to know You. I was wrong to be angry with the pastor for not baptizing me."

Peace flooded over her as she prayed. For the first time in her life, she felt that God was near.

From that moment, life has not been the same. "Before I always longed for friends," she said. "But now I have a Friend that I can talk to at any time, and I don't need to look for Him to talk." 🌍

Part of this quarter's Thirteenth Sabbath Offering will help Zaoksky Christian School construct its own school building on the campus of Zaoksky Adventist University. Currently the school borrows classrooms from the university, and your offering will help the children meet in their own classrooms.

By Andrew McChesney

Story Tips

- Download photos on Facebook (bit.ly/fb-mq).
- Masha is not identified by her full name because she is a minor.

Fast Facts

- The matryoshka is a Russian nesting doll, a set of wooden figures that can be pulled apart to reveal a similar but smaller figure inside, with usually six or more in total. The shape of the doll is usually smoothly cylindrical with all the decoration being painted on, often elaborately. The most common theme is usually peasant girls in traditional dress, but it can be almost anything, including political figures and fairy tales.
- Traditional Russian cuisine is diverse, reflecting the vast territory of the country, and was originally based on a hearty diet intended for people working outside in harsh climates, with lots of protein from meat, and carbohydrates from various grains, including rye, barley and wheat. Soups and stews made from vegetables, meat, and fish are prevalent. In recent centuries, more refined culinary techniques and food imports from abroad have been creatively incorporated into Russian cuisine.
- During the twentieth century, particularly during the Soviet years, Russia produced internationally famous ballet stars, including Anna Pavlova, Vaslav Nijinsky, Maya Plisetskaya, Rudolf Nureyev, and Mikhail Baryshnikov.
- Lake Baikal, in Siberia, is the largest lake, by volume, in the world, with 5,670 cubic miles (23,615 cubic km) of water: nearly a quarter of the world's fresh surface water. At its deepest, it reaches 5,387 feet (1,642 m), making it the world's deepest lake as well.

Ivan's Greatest Day



RUSSIA | January 30

Ivan Sharonov, 27

he had two options: pay a double fine immediately, or go to jail for 15 days.

Ivan couldn't believe the terrible day that he was having. As the judge spoke, images of the end of the world and Judgment Day flashed through Ivan's mind. "If I don't repent now and return to God, I will end up on the wrong side on Judgment Day," he thought.

Ivan wasn't raised in a Christian home, but he believed in God. His mother had been baptized into the Seventh-day Adventist Church when he was a teenager, and he had attended a small group with her and other Adventists for a year. But then he entered the university and forgot about God.

Now in court, he found the money to pay the fine. Receiving back his driving license, he drove carefully to his mother.

A day later he came down with a high temperature, and he lay in bed for three days, feeling awful. He opened a Bible, and his eyes fell on Matthew 6:33, "Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness and all these things shall be added unto you."

Jesus' words touched his heart. He had never noticed them before. He realized that he had been putting his studies and even his family before God. Even though he still had a high temperature, he wanted to leave the house to spend some quiet time with God. He drove to a quiet spot

Life seemed perfect until one day when Ivan was 22.

First, he had a big argument with his mother during a visit to his hometown outside Kazan, Russia. Then his landlord called to evict him from the apartment that he rented near his university in Kazan. That afternoon, he failed an exam at the university. Later that day, the police stopped him as he drove back to his mother's house and discovered that he had an unpaid fine for speeding.

"You didn't want to pay your fine," the police officer said. "Now you will have to go to court."

The officer confiscated Ivan's driving license and told him to drive behind him to the courthouse. In court, the officer explained the situation to the judge. The judge sternly informed Ivan that

by a river. There he poured out his sorrow and deep personal repentance to God.

“I want to return to You,” he prayed. “I want You to be near to me.”

From that moment, Ivan began to make God first in everything. He prayed a lot. He read the Bible every morning and evening. He read “Early Writings” and other Ellen White books. He was baptized and became a church youth leader.

Before giving his heart to Jesus, Ivan had organized a highly successful fitness club in Kazan. City authorities had noticed his work and invited him to organize public workout sessions during local holidays. He had been featured in local newspapers.

Now he gave up the fitness club and opened a new one that worked only with children. Soon he was training 20 children for free in a public park. The children noticed that Ivan loved Jesus and began asking questions. A 16-year-old girl started attending church.

After graduating with an engineering degree from the university, Ivan felt that God was calling him to study theology and to become a pastor. He moved to Zaoksky Adventist University, where he is a third-year student. Every summer, he returns to Kazan to train children to be physically fit and also good citizens. He organizes community service activities such as picking up garbage from city streets.

Ivan doesn’t have any bad memories about that dreadful day five years ago.

“That was an awful day back then,” he said. “But now I understand that it was the most wonderful day of my life because God used it to save me.” 🌍

Part of this quarter’s Thirteenth Sabbath Offering will help Zaoksky

Story Tips

- Show Zaoksky, Russia, on the map. It is south of Moscow. Also find Kazan.
- Download photos on Facebook (bit.ly/fb-mq).
- Download ESD Mission Posts and Fast Facts at: bit.ly/2021-ESD.

Fast Facts

- In 1885, Tsar Alexander III commissioned Peter Carl Fabergé, a jeweler in St. Petersburg, to create a jeweled egg to give as an Easter gift to his wife, Maria. The egg was made of gold, with a white enameled “shell” that opened up to show a yellow yolk. This in turn opened to reveal a tiny hen, and inside this was a replica of the imperial crown, made from a diamond. Maria loved it so much that Alexander appointed Fabergé as the official imperial goldsmith. Each year he created a new, and more elaborate egg for Maria, and after Alexander’s death in 1894, his son, Nicholas II, continued the tradition, ordering one for his mother, Maria, and one for his wife, Alexandra. In total, 52 imperial eggs were made, 46 of which still survive.

Christian School construct its own school building on the campus of Zaoksky Adventist University. Currently the day and boarding school borrows classrooms from the university, and your offering will help the children meet in their own classrooms. Among the students at the boarding school is the girl who joined the church through Ivan’s fitness club. Thank you for planning a generous offering.

By Andrew McChesney

Life-Shattering Crash

RUSSIA | February 6

Olga Noshin, 34



A car accident shattered Olga and Roman's Black Sea vacation.

The young couple, married only three years, were driving between seaside cities when Roman missed a turn. He slowed down and made a U-turn in the middle of the road. As he turned, a white Mercedes car came barreling down the highway and struck the side of the Volkswagen. The Volkswagen spun around for what seemed like an eternity. Finally, it stopped. The windows were shattered, and the doors were jammed shut. Olga and Roman climbed out of a broken window. They hadn't suffered a scratch, but the car was a crumpled mess.

Roman and Olga looked over at the Mercedes. It also was totaled, and the driver was fine.

The police arrived and deemed Roman responsible for the accident. Roman buried his face in his hands. "We are going

to lose several years of our lives paying for the Mercedes," he said.

At that moment, Olga realized that the accident came at a high price. Roman owned minimal insurance, and it wouldn't cover the cost of the expensive car. Olga walked away from the wrecked cars and into a roadside vineyard. Falling onto her knees, she prayed, "Please help us." She opened her eyes and stood up. The wrecked cars remained on the road.

The other driver, Musa, was talking sternly to Roman. "Give me all your documents," he said. "Pay me for the car, and I'll give them back to you."

Roman handed over his driving license.

After the police finished their paperwork, someone came for Musa. Roman and Olga had no way to travel on. While waiting for the tow truck, they went to the vineyard to talk. There had been tensions in their relationship in recent weeks, and now the emotions came spilling out. Olga realized that they had been near divorce. The couple asked each other and God for forgiveness.

That night, Roman and Olga slept on the seashore. In the morning, Musa called and invited them to stay at his house. He had a second car, and he drove them around for the next week as they sorted out the insurance and other legal paperwork. He was surprised to learn that Roman and Olga didn't eat meat. His surprise grew when he found out that they

didn't drink alcohol. "You are strange people," he said. "Who are you?"

"We are Seventh-day Adventists," Olga said.

"No kidding," he said. "You are the second Adventist that I have met in my life."

It turned out that Musa was not a Christian and he had two wives. He also was overcome with guilt. He told his guests that he had forced his second wife to have an abortion just a few days before the accident.

"I think the accident was God's punishment," he said.

He had loved the Mercedes and purchased it on special order a week before the accident.

Roman and Olga called friends back home in Zaoksky, Russia, to borrow money to pay for the car. Within three days they had raised the money, but friends kept calling to offer more money and to ask whether they could help in other ways.

Musa overheard the phone calls and wept.

"I'm rich," he said. "I have many connections. I have helped a lot of people earn a lot of money. But not one of my friends has called to see if I am fine after the accident. You are poor and have nothing, but your friends care about you."

At the end of the week, the money was repaid, and Musa returned Roman's driving license. He also declared that he needed to go to another city for a few days — the same city to which Roman and Olga had been traveling at the time of the accident. "Would you like to stay with me?" he asked.

Roman and Olga spent the next two days in the most luxurious house that they had ever seen. Afterward they took the train back to Zaoksky.

Story Tips

- Watch Olga on YouTube: bit.ly/Olga-ESD.
- Download photos on Facebook (bit.ly/fb-mq).
- Download ESD Mission Posts and Fast Facts at: bit.ly/2021-ESD.

Fast Facts

- Russian authors Leo Tolstoy and Fyodor Dostoyevsky are considered by many literary critics as the greatest novelists of all time.

The next year was very difficult as they repaid their debt, but Olga thanked God for the accident. It had saved their marriage. As she thanked God, she received a raise at work and Roman got a new job with a higher salary. They were able to repay their debt in only a year.

"We have never wanted anything," she said. "God has provided all our needs." 🌍

Olga was among the first schoolchildren to attend Zaoksky Christian School, entering the first grade in 1993. She finished grade school and high school there and went on to graduate from Zaoksky Adventist University. Part of this quarter's Thirteenth Sabbath Offering will help Zaoksky Christian School construct its own school building on the campus of Zaoksky Adventist University. Currently the boarding school borrows classrooms from the university, and your offering will help the children meet in their own classrooms.

By Andrew McChesney

Skipping School for Church

RUSSIA | February 13

Yelena, 16



Eleven-year-old Yelena was walking home from school in Dmitrovgrad, Russia, on a Saturday afternoon when she suddenly remembered that she used to go to church on Saturday.

She hadn't thought about church for a long time, and she wasn't sure why she was thinking about church now. But an unusual desire welled up in her heart to go to church. She called Mother on her cell phone.

"Mother, remember we used to go to church on Sabbath?" she said. "Can I go there now?"

"Of course, you can go," Mother said. "You don't have to ask."

Yelena arrived just in time for the sermon. She slid into a seat in the back and listened. Afterward, she saw her old Sabbath School teacher.

"Come again," the teacher said.

Yelena smiled shyly. She wanted to come back.

Yelena's parents divorced when she was small, but they had taken her to church until she was 5. Then they had gotten tired of seeing each other in church and quit going to church all together. Yelena went to public school and had classes six days a week, from Monday through Saturday.

As soon as school ended at 1 p.m. the next Sabbath, Yelena immediately returned to church. She didn't understand the sermon, but she tried to make sense of it. She liked being in the church where she used to worship as a small girl. She liked being among the other children in the church.

After a while, she started skipping classes at school so she could go to church earlier on Sabbath. A month passed, and she invited her older sister, Oksana, to go with her. Oksana, who was 13, agreed, and the two went together. Then Mother noticed that Yelena and Oksana were going to church, and she started going with them.

But then some church children moved away with their parents. Other children stopped going to church. Then Mother stopped going. Yelena also stopped going every Sabbath.

A church member noticed Yelena's absence and asked her to help with the sound system. Yelena agreed, and now she had to go to church every Sabbath because the church members needed her. As she went, she also began reading the

Bible and books by Ellen White regularly. She especially grew fond of “The Great Controversy.”

Mother saw that Yelena liked Sabbath School and was making good friends with the adults in the church. She started going to church again.

After communion service one Sabbath, Mother turned to Yelena with a serious question.

“Do you want to be baptized?” she asked.

Yelena had already thought about it, and she immediately said that she wanted to give her heart to Jesus.

Yelena took baptismal classes and was baptized. The water in the baptismal tank was terribly cold, but a warm joy flooded over her when she came out of the water. She had made the best decision of her life. She had given her heart to Jesus.

Yelena never went to school on Saturday again. Mother wrote a note to the principal, asking for Yelena to be excused from Saturday classes so she could worship God. The school gave her permission. But Yelena also had to make up Saturday schoolwork, and she struggled to make good grades.

Today, Saturday schoolwork is no longer a problem. After that school year, Yelena learned about Zaoksky Christian School, an Adventist day and boarding school located about 600 miles (1,000 kilometers) away from her hometown. She couldn’t afford to pay tuition, but a church member offered to help. Today she is 16 years old and in the eleventh grade.

“It is awesome to study here,” she said. “The teachers are kind, and they help me with my studies. I am very glad that we don’t have classes on Saturday.” 🌍

Part of this quarter’s Thirteenth

Story Tips

- Yelena is not identified by her last name because Adventist Mission does not publish the surnames of minors.
- Watch Yelena on YouTube: bit.ly/Yelena-ESD.
- Download photos on Facebook (bit.ly/fb-mq).
- Download ESD Mission Posts and Fast Facts at: bit.ly/2021-ESD.

Fast Facts

- Folk dancing is an important part of Russian culture, and one of the most dramatic is the squat dance, usually performed by men, in which the men squat down, with their torsos held upright, and then alternately kick their legs out straight in front of them. The music is usually very quick, and the performers have to have very strong legs and excellent balance.
- Parts of what is now Russia were conquered and settled by Vikings, known in that part of the world as Varangians, between the ninth and eleventh centuries.

Sabbath Offering will help Zaoksky Christian School construct its own school building on the campus of Zaoksky Adventist University. Currently the boarding school borrows classrooms from the university, and your offering will help the children meet in their own classrooms. Thank you for planning a generous Thirteenth Sabbath Offering. Please pray for the children who are studying at the school.

By Andrew McChesney

Sabbath Car Accident

RUSSIA | February 20

Anna Khizhnyakova, 32



More than anything, 16-year-old Anna wanted Internet in her home in a remote village in the Russian Far East.

It was 2003, and she didn't want to be left out of the new phenomenon.

Father and Mother agreed to drive Anna to the store to buy a modem on a Sabbath morning. They weren't Seventh-day Adventists. Anna, however, had been baptized about a year earlier after learning about Jesus from her grandmother. She knew that it was wrong to go shopping on Sabbath, but she wanted the Internet so much.

That last thing she remembers was leaving the house and getting into the car.

Grandmother later told her what happened.

Father exceeded the speed limit as he drove on a slick wintery road toward the store. Suddenly, the car slid into the oncoming lane and was hit head-on by a truck. Father and Mother died of their

injuries, and the truck driver sustained a broken leg. Anna was hospitalized in a coma, and the doctor predicted she wouldn't survive. Grandmother fasted and prayed and asked other church members to join her. To the doctor's surprise, Anna came out of the coma in three days and rapidly recovered. In two months, she was back in school, and she finished tenth grade with the rest of her class.

Grandmother moved in with Anna, giving her physical and spiritual support, in her family home in Novoshatinsk village in the Primorye region. But Anna sank into dark sadness. She felt overwhelming guilt for her parents' death. She didn't blame God. She knew that He doesn't cause death. But she also knew that it was wrong to go shopping on Sabbath. She wished that she had told her parents to stay at home. They could have waited until after Sabbath to connect the Internet. She blamed herself for their deaths.

The dark guilt followed Anna when she moved to the port city of Vladivostok to enter the university. She attended the only Adventist church in the city, but she didn't go every Sabbath. She went just often enough to keep Grandmother happy. She knew that she wasn't living a godly life, and her guilt deepened.

Grandma prayed for Anna, and she called every day.

“Have you read the Bible today?” Grandmother would ask, gently.

If Anna said she had, Grandmother would inquire about what she had read.

“Have you prayed today?” Grandmother would say. “Don’t forget to pray.”

Grandmother asked Anna to share her struggles and prayed for her over the phone.

At the university, Anna met an Adventist teacher who helped with her homework. The teacher also prayed for her and asked the church to pray for her.

Anna remembered her own baptism and prayed for forgiveness.

“I see that my life is wrong,” she prayed. “I see that I am living in darkness. Life without You is pointless. Help me to make good friends at church. Give me a friendly disposition. Teach me to be open. Help me to remember to pray and read the Bible.”

Anna began to talk to God regularly. She read a copy of Ellen White’s “The Great Controversy” that Grandmother had given her some time earlier. She saw the difficulties that Martin Luther and other reformers had experienced, and she realized that God forgives even the worst of sinners. She gave up her bad habits.

Anna began to call Grandmother every day instead of waiting to be called.

Her faith grew, and she joyfully went to church every Sabbath to seek God. She understood that God had forgiven her for her sins and wasn’t going to remind her of them. A huge weight was lifted from her heart.

Today Anna is 32 and working as a university teacher. She also is a Pathfinder leader and serves as church secretary. She has no idea why the accident happened, but she no longer worries about it.

Story Tips

- Download photos on Facebook (bit.ly/fb-mq).
- Download ESD Mission Posts and Fast Facts at: bit.ly/2021-ESD.

Fast Facts

- The Russian Federation is the largest country in the world. At 6.6 million square miles (17 million km²) it covers nearly one-tenth of the earth’s land area.

“Many people have told me that I’m not at fault, but I don’t think that things happen by chance,” she said. “Even if the accident was by chance, the fact remains that it took place on Sabbath. Even today I sometimes think about what might have been. But the fact is that the accident happened, and it changed my life. I had one life before the accident and another life afterward.”

Anna is grateful for the prayers of Grandmother, who is 80, and other church members. She said they helped change her life.

“I understand that many of my problems were solved because the church prayed for me,” she said. “Nothing is worthwhile in life without God.” 🌍

Part of the Thirteenth Sabbath Offering three years ago helped construct a new building for Anna’s church in Vladivostok. Thank you for supporting the Adventist church in Vladivostok with your mission offering and prayers.

By Andrew McChesney

Thanking God for the Table

VEILED COUNTRY | February 27

Dinara



Photo by Ryan Riggins on Unsplash

Seven-year-old Dinara accidentally angered her mother over supper.

Dinara looked up from her plate of macaroni with fried onions and nodded toward the wooden table under the plate.

“Mommy, did you know that God gave us this table?” she said.

Mother was shocked.

“What are you talking about?” she said. “That is complete nonsense! Your father worked hard and bought the table at the store. Stop acting like a silly girl.”

Dinara persisted.

“No, they told me that it was God,” she said.

“Who told you that?” said Mother, who like many people in their country was not a Christian. “Where and when did you hear that God gave us this table?”

Dinara explained that she and the other first graders had learned about kindness

at their public school. The teacher, who was a Seventh-day Adventist, had told the children about God during the lesson.

“Everything that you have in your house is from God,” the teacher said. “You should be grateful.”

Dinara thought that she was being helpful by sharing this new knowledge with Mother. But Mother was furious, and she scolded Dinara for not respecting Father for working hard to buy the table.

“I’ll go to the school tomorrow to find out why they are teaching children about God,” she said.

Mother raised a storm at school the next day, and she got other parents involved as well. The school principal promised that no one would mention God in the classroom again.

The uproar left a deep impression on Dinara. Even though she didn’t hear about God again at school, she thought about Him often.

Nine years passed. The family bought a new home when Dinara was 16, and she

Story Tips

- Dinara is a pseudonym. She lives in a “veiled country,” a country that Adventist Mission has chosen not to identify because of regional sensitivities involving Christianity.
- Download ESD Mission Posts and Fast Facts at: bit.ly/2021-ESD.

found a tattered children’s Bible in the house. The light-blue book was missing more than half its pages, but Dinara read what remained with great interest. She didn’t understand much of what she read, but she understood that it was about God. She longed to read the whole Bible.

Three more years passed. Dinara started studying English at an Adventist school, and a teacher invited her and other students to a Sabbath meeting.

“If you want, come to our meeting next Sabbath,” the teacher said.

Dinara went to the meeting. It was interesting. People prayed, talked about the Bible, and sang songs. Several foreigners attended the meeting, and she practiced her English with them.

Dinara went to the meeting every Sabbath for some time. During that time, she married a man who believed in the seventh-day Sabbath and was happy to go with her to the meetings when he wasn’t working.

But Dinara felt increasingly uncomfortable. While sitting in the meeting one Sabbath, a thought popped into her mind.

“Am I was doing the right thing?” she thought. “What am I doing here? My people aren’t Christians.”

She stopped going to church. She wanted to go, but she was afraid.

Seeing the ongoing struggle, her husband, Nikolai, asked why she wasn’t attending the Sabbath meetings. Dinara explained her confusion.

“My parents believe that there is no God other than their God,” she said.

“Why are you scared?” Nikolai said. “There is only one God. There is no reason to be afraid.”

Dinara said she thought her people were allowed to read only their traditional holy book, but she had a desire to read the Bible.

Nikolai showed her that the traditional holy book and the Bible had things in common.

Then Dinara said she worried that her people were supposed to worship in their traditional house of worship, but she had a desire to go to the Adventist house of worship.

“That’s not a problem,” Nikolai said. “You can go to both. Feel free to go to worship with the Adventists. Nothing is stopping you.”

Dinara resumed worshipping with the Adventists, and she gave her heart to God.

Today she is happy to be able to read the Bible anytime she wants. She thanks God for the Bible and everything in her home.

“I say ‘thank you’ all the time!” she said. “From the moment I wake up until I go to bed at night, I thank God for life, for food, and even for the table. Everything good comes from God.” 🌍

Thank you for supporting Seventh-day Adventist education in the Euro-Asia Division with your prayers and mission offerings.

By Andrew McChesney

Sports Changes Lives



KYRGYZSTAN | March 6

Jesús Maximiliano Gómez, 24

Jesús nearly died during a complicated shoulder operation to repair a sports injury. After the operation, he felt a strong desire to do something special for God.

But what?

Jesús resolved to thank God by working for a month as a literature evangelist after graduating from River Plate University in Argentina.

He would give all his earnings from selling books to the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

During his last year of studies, Jesús found it challenging to participate in gymnastics. His shoulder was acting up. Teachers warned that he would not graduate as a physical education major if he could not fulfill all the requirements.

The doctor advised him to change his major.

“If you continue participating in

gymnastics, your shoulder will only grow worse,” the doctor said.

Jesús didn’t want to change his major so close to graduation. Besides, he didn’t have the money to change his major and stay at the university for several more years.

As Jesús contemplated the future, a friend, Marcos, asked what he planned to do after graduation.

Jesús told him about his idea to work for a month as a literature evangelist and to give all of his earnings to the Adventist Church.

Marcos liked the idea, but he had another one.

“Why don’t you go to Kyrgyzstan?” he asked.

Marcos had worked as a volunteer at an Adventist school in Kyrgyzstan for a year.

Jesús had never thought about traveling halfway around the world, but

he liked the suggestion. He prayed about it and promised God to go to Kyrgyzstan if he graduated that year.

When it came time to take the final exam in gymnastics, Jesús prayed for help to do the seemingly impossible exercises. To his surprise, he was able to complete all the exercises successfully.

Afterward, the doctor examined Jesús' shoulder and expressed surprise. The old wound had healed completely. It was a real miracle.

Jesús graduated and flew to Kyrgyzstan one month later.

Arriving at the Adventist school in Tokmok, Jesús was placed in charge of physical education classes and made coach of an afternoon soccer class organized for neighborhood children. The soccer class met in a new school gym built with help from a 2017 Thirteenth Sabbath Offering.

But that's not the end of the story. As Jesús and the children played together, Jesús noticed big changes in the children's behavior. The boys used to argue and fight a lot, but they stopped when Jesús told them, "We are brothers and sisters. We don't need to fight."

After seeing some boys drinking alcohol, he advised them to quit.

"It is bad for your bodies," he said.

The boys stopped drinking.

Jesús is glad that he has given a year of his life to volunteering in Kyrgyzstan.

"I can see a big change in my students," he said. "Also we have never lost a match against another school!" 🌍

Part of the Thirteenth Sabbath Offering three years ago helped construct the gymnasium at the Seventh-day Adventist school in Tokmok, Kyrgyzstan. Thank

Story Tips

- Pronounce Jesús as: HYE-sus.
- Download photos on Facebook (bit.ly/fb-mq).
- Download ESD Mission Posts and Fast Facts at: bit.ly/2021-ESD.

Mission Post

- The Kyrgyzstan Mission is part of the Southern Union Mission within the Euro-Asia Division. It has 11 churches and 12 companies and a membership of 664. With a population of 6,457,000, there is one Adventist for every 9,724 people.
- Around 90% of the population of Kyrgyzstan is Muslim, and the Kyrgyzstan Mission runs a ministry for Adventist-Muslim Relationships.

Fast Facts

- The capital of Kyrgyzstan is Bishkek, formerly Pishpek (and renamed Frunze during the Soviet years) and is located near the northern border, where it was originally a fortress built to control the caravan routes into the country. It now has a population of over a million.
- The flag of Kyrgyzstan is a yellow sun on a red background. The 40 rays of the sun refer to the 40 tribes united under the ninth-century hero, Manas, to fight off the invading Uyghurs. The diagonal stripes in the center of the sun represent the crown of the yurt, the traditional dwelling of the nomads of the Central Asian steppes.

you for supporting Adventist education in Kyrgyzstan and elsewhere in the Euro-Asia Division.

By Andrew McChesney

A Book and a School



KYRGYZSTAN | March 13

Tatyana Sokolovskaya, 72,
and Andrei Sokolovsky, 37

Tatyana stopped at a used-book store on her way home from work at the Seventh-day Adventist school in Tokmok, Kyrgyzstan.

She had just started teaching Russian language and literature at the school after unexpectedly receiving a job offer from the principal.

As Tatyana paid for several books, the salesclerk picked up another book.

“Here,” she said. “You can have this book as a gift.”

Tatyana wasn’t going to turn down a free book. She took the book, paid for the others, and placed them all in her purse. At home, she curiously examined the free book. It was called “The Great Controversy.” She had never heard about the author, Ellen G. White. She leafed through the pages and saw contact information for a man named Pavel

Noskov printed on the last page. To her surprise, the address was in the same apartment building where she lived.

As she thought for the next few days about Pavel being her neighbor, she noticed that a teacher at the school had the same last name as Pavel. Tatyana took the book to school and showed it to the teacher, Arina.

“Are you Pavel’s wife?” she asked.

“Yes,” Arina said. “Pavel is my husband.”

Tatyana learned that the family was Seventh-day Adventist and attended church every Sabbath. Arina invited Tatyana and her adult son, Andrei, over to chat with her and her husband, Pavel. During one of their meetings, Pavel told Tatyana that Adventists view Ellen White as a beloved author and prophet. Intrigued, Tatyana read “The Great Controversy” with great interest.

Tatyana and Andrei began attending a small Bible study group that met weekly in Pavel and Arina’s home. When Pavel’s

mother fell ill and a new place was needed for the small group, Tatyana opened her home for the Bible studies.

Just a few weeks later, a spiritual crisis erupted. Tatyana and Andrei both felt strongly that they had to make a decision to become Adventists or to stop associating with Adventists altogether. They told Pavel that they didn't know what to do.

“Only God can save you from this crisis,” Pavel said.

Tatyana and Pavel prayed and decided to attend their first worship service on Sabbath. The experience at church was unlike anything they had ever experienced. The church members were warm and welcoming. They were overjoyed to see the visitors and treated them like long-lost friends. Tatyana and Andrei felt that they had come home.

Tatyana and Andrei were baptized together on April 6, 2019.

Tatyana credits the Adventist school for leading her son and herself to God.

“I thank this school,” she said. “If I had not come here to work, I would not have stopped at the bookstore on the way home and learned that one of the neighbors in my building was an Adventist. I would not have known about the Adventist Church. God directed our path.” 🌐

Part of the Thirteenth Sabbath Offering three years ago helped construct a gymnasium at the Seventh-day Adventist school in Tokmok, Kyrgyzstan. Thank you for supporting Adventist education in Kyrgyzstan and elsewhere in the Euro-Asia Division.

By Andrew McChesney

Story Tips

- Download photos on Facebook (bit.ly/fb-mq).
- Download ESD Mission Posts and Fast Facts at: bit.ly/2021-ESD.

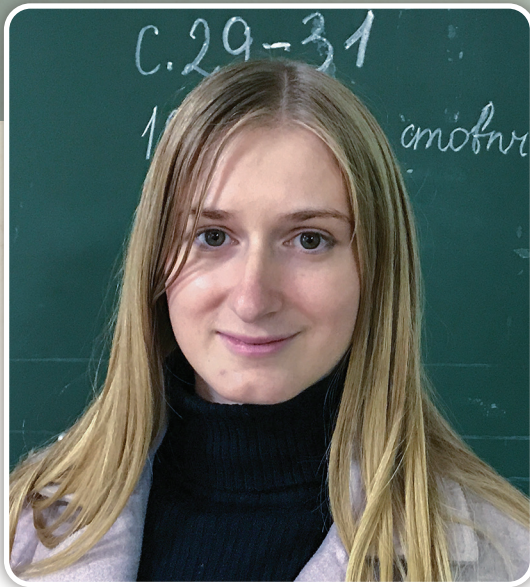
Fast Facts

- The Tian Shan (The Mountains of Heaven) is a region in Central Asia consisting of a series of mountain ranges. Eighty percent of Kyrgyzstan lies within the Tian Shan and its two highest peaks are found on Kyrgyzstan's borders. The highest, at 24,406 feet (7,439 meters) is Jengish Chokusu (Victory Peak) on the border with China. The second highest, at 23,000 feet (7,010 meters), is Khan Tengri (Lord of the Spirits), on the Kazakhstan border.
- Kyrgyzstan's largest ethnic group (73.3%) are the Kyrgyz. Historically nomadic, the Kyrgyz moved with their herds of sheep, horses, and yaks, living in portable round tents called yurts. Most Kyrgyz herders are still semi-nomadic and take their herds into the mountains during the summer.
- Falconry is a traditional pastime in Central Asia, particularly hunting with eagles. The Kyrgyz name for the golden eagle is *bürküt* and the handler is a *bürkütchü*.
- Another indication of how important horses are to the Kyrgyz culture is the popularity of the drink Kumis, a fermented drink traditionally made from mare's milk.
- For most of its history Kyrgyzstan has been inhabited by various clans and tribes, although it has on occasion been occupied by foreign powers. In 1991, after the break-up of the Soviet Union, it established itself as an independent state.

Rowdy First Grader

UKRAINE | March 20

Lyudmila Komkova, 24



Teacher Lyudmila wasn't sure what to do with 6-year-old Matvei in first grade at the Seventh-day Adventist school in Bucha, Ukraine.

When he had a question during the Ukrainian-language lesson, he didn't sit quietly and raise his hand like the other children. Instead he stood up.

"Where should I write?" he shouted.

During math, he also didn't sit quietly and raise his hand.

"Which page are we at in the textbook?" he shouted.

Lyudmila tried to explain to Matvei that he needed to sit quietly and raise his hand when he had a question. But he didn't seem to understand. His shouting was disrupting the class.

The first graders quickly made friends with one another. But Matvei had trouble

making friends. When he wasn't ignoring the other children, he was arguing with them. If he didn't like something that they said, he shoved or hit them.

Lyudmila wasn't sure what to do with Matvei. This was her first teaching job after graduating from the university. She wanted to help the boy learn and make friends. She tried to make the lessons more interesting. She tried to talk with Matvei. Nothing helped. She couldn't do anything. Coming home from school one day, just a few weeks into the school year, she turned to God in prayer.

"God, I ask you for patience and wisdom to find a way to work with this child," she prayed.

In the morning, she prayed again.

"God, please lead me as I teach today," she said. "Show me how to work with

Matvei and how to teach him. Help me to be a good teacher to all the children.”

Lyudmila prayed for Matvei every morning and every evening for six weeks. One day, she noticed a big change in the classroom. Matvei didn’t stand up and shout his questions. Instead, he sat quietly and raised his hand. He stopped ignoring, shoving, or hitting the other children. Instead, he spoke to them kindly.

Matvei saw that one of the other boys lost his pencil and couldn’t do his schoolwork.

“Here,” he said. “Take mine.”

Lyudmila’s heart was touched. Matvei only had one pencil, and he was giving it away. Another boy saw that Matvei needed a pencil and gave him one of his.

Matvei began to make friends. The children liked him. He was kind and generous. He was willing to share whatever he had.

For Lyudmila, it was a big lesson.

“I understood that we are God’s children,” she said. “God shows such patience and love toward us. God works our whole lives to refine our characters. He did a miracle in my life. I never thought He could change Matvei so quickly.”

She added: “I understood when we do everything that we can, God does that which is impossible for us.” 🌍

Part of this quarter’s Thirteenth Sabbath Offering will help Lyudmila’s school construct its own building. Currently the school borrows classrooms from an Adventist college, and your offering will help the children meet in their own classrooms. Thank you for planning a generous offering.

By Andrew McChesney

Story Tips

- Pronounce Matvei as: matt-VAY. The name means Matthew.
- The name of the child has been changed to protect his privacy.
- Watch Lyudmila on YouTube: bit.ly/Lyudmila-ESD.
- Download photos on Facebook (bit.ly/fb-mq).
- Download ESD Mission Posts and Fast Facts at: bit.ly/2021-ESD.

Mission Post

- Ukraine has a long Christian history. In 988, Prince Vladimir of Kiev, known as Vladimir the Great, negotiated a marriage to Anna, sister of the Byzantine emperor, Basil II, and converted to Eastern Orthodox Christianity. Subsequently he destroyed many of the pagan shrines and established a number of Christian churches.
- The Adventist message was preached in the area for the first time on the Black Sea coast in Crimea and the Caucasus by German missionaries Perka and Kandad. After a baptism in 1886, the first Seventh-day Adventist church with 17 members was established in the village of Berdibulat.
- The Orthodox Church, and later the Communist Party, were hostile to Adventism in Ukraine. Many church members and pastors were persecuted for their beliefs and spent many years in prison. Some died in camps during Stalin’s time. Because of this, the church was developed as an underground institution, and the establishment of the Adventist Church organization only began in 1978.

Teach Us to Pray

13th SABBATH | March 27

Natalya Berlinskaya, 43



Once a week, Teacher Natalya gathered the ninth graders into a circle around the classroom for a special prayer.

“Viktoria, you start the prayer,” she said one morning.

Fifteen-year-old Viktoria looked at teacher with big, round, scared eyes.

“How?” she said. “How do I pray?”

“Begin like this,” Teacher said, “Dear God.”

“That’s how I should start?” Viktoria said.

“Yes, say that,” Teacher said.

“What next?” she asked.

“Ask God to bless us as you just read in the story,” Teacher said.

Viktoria had just read a story about how the sun rises every day and shines on all people, good and bad. The story had said Jesus shines His love on everyone, every day, and Christians also should be a light

to all people every day.

“Dear God,” Viktoria said. “Help us to be good students. Help us to be a light.”

Viktoria wasn’t the only child who was scared to pray out loud in the ninth-grade class at the Seventh-day Adventist school in Bucha, Ukraine. Four of the seven children in the class came from Adventist families. Viktoria and the two others not from Adventist families were not used to praying. Teacher wanted them to pray and experience the power of prayer for themselves.

After praying the first time, Viktoria wasn’t scared to pray again. But her best friend, Ruslan, refused to pray.

“I am scared to pray,” Ruslan said. “I can’t pray in front of everyone.”

Teacher prayed for Ruslan in a special way. Then Viktoria fell ill with an ear

infection. She didn't come to school for a whole month. All the students were worried about Viktoria. Teacher was worried. Ruslan was especially worried. Teacher decided to have a special prayer every day for Viktoria. Everyone prayed for her but Ruslan.

One morning, Teacher announced to that Viktoria would have an ear operation the next day. She called the students to stand in a circle for prayer. "Who wants to pray for Viktoria?" she said.

"I want to pray!" Ruslan blurted out.

Everyone was surprised. Ruslan also was surprised. "What did I say?" he asked.

The children bowed their head and closed their eyes. "Dear Jesus," Ruslan said. "Bless Viktoria's operation. Help her not to lose her hearing. Heal her, and help her to return to our class. Amen."

The operation was a success. A few weeks later Viktoria returned to school.

"God hears all our prayers, especially the prayers of children who are scared," Teacher Natalya said in an interview. "We shouldn't be afraid to open our hearts to God. We can pray anywhere and anytime, and God will answer in ways we cannot imagine." 🌍

This quarter's Thirteenth Sabbath Offering will help Teacher Natalya's school construct its own school building in Bucha, Ukraine. Currently the school borrows classrooms from an Adventist college, and your offering will help the children meet in their own classrooms. Thank you for your generous offering today for our two mission projects — the Adventist school in Bucha, Ukraine, and Zaoksky Christian School in Russia.

By Andrew McChesney

Story Tips

- Names of the students have been changed to protect their privacy.
- Before or after the story, use a map to show Russia and Ukraine, which will receive the Thirteenth Sabbath Offering. Briefly describe how each place will benefit from the offering.
- Watch Natalya on YouTube: bit.ly/Natalya-ESD.
- Download photos on Facebook (bit.ly/fb-mq).
- Download ESD Mission Posts and Fast Facts at: bit.ly/2021-ESD.

Fast Facts

- Ukraine is located in eastern Europe and is the second-largest country on the continent after Russia. The capital, Kyiv, is in the north of the country, on the Dnieper River.
- Ukraine has the fourth-highest number of certified IT professionals after the U.S., India, and Russia.
- Ukraine has a number of nature and game reserves, reflecting its commitment to the conservation of its natural heritage, particularly the steppes. The first of these, Askaniya-Nova, began as a private wildlife refuge in 1875; today it has a successful program of breeding endangered species, including the onager and Przewalski's horse.
- The national dish of Ukraine, and the one most familiar to foreigners, is borsch, a soup made primarily from beets, as well as other vegetables such as cabbage, potatoes, tomatoes, carrots, and onions and often flavored with garlic and dill. There are about 30 different kinds of Ukrainian borscht.

Kyrgyz Gingerbread

(KYRGYZSTAN)

INGREDIENTS

1/3 cup (70g) shortening
1/2 cup (66g) sugar
1 egg
2 1/2 cups (300g) flour
2 tsp (10ml) baking soda
1 tsp (5ml) salt

1 tsp (5ml) ground cloves
1 tsp (5ml) ground ginger
1/2 tsp (2.5ml) cinnamon
1 cup (240ml) molasses
1 cup (240ml) hot water

INSTRUCTIONS

Preheat oven to 375°F (190°C). Butter and flour a 9x9 inch (23x23 cm) cake pan. Mix flour, baking soda and spices together and set aside. Mix molasses and hot water and set aside. Cream shortening and sugar. Add egg and mix well. Alternately add dry ingredients and molasses mixture to creamed mixture. The batter will be thin. Pour into cake pan and bake for 45 minutes or more until a toothpick comes out clean. Cool in pan for 5 minutes before turning out.

Serve with whipped cream flavored with pure vanilla and sweetened with sugar.



BigStockPhoto.com

Adapted from recipe at bit.ly/KyrgyzGB

Future Thirteenth Sabbath Projects

The Thirteenth Sabbath Offering this quarter will help the Inter-American Division to open 13 Better Living “centers of influence,” one at each of the following:

- Antillean Adventist University (Puerto Rican Union), Puerto Rico
- Colombia Adventist University (North Colombian Union), Colombia
- Cuba Adventist Theological Seminary (Cuban Union), Cuba
- Dominican Adventist University (Dominican Union), Dominican Republic
- Haitian Adventist University Academy (Haitian Union), Haiti
- Linda Vista University (Southeast Mexican Union), Mexico
- Navojoa University (North Mexican Union), Mexico
- Montemorelos University (North Mexican Union), Mexico
- Northern Caribbean University (Jamaica Union), Jamaica
- Central America Adventist University (South Central American Union), Costa Rica
- University of the Southern Caribbean (Caribbean Union), Trinidad
- Adventist University Institute of Venezuela (West Venezuela Union), Venezuela
- Belize Adventist Junior College (Belize Union), Belize

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

Kyrgyzstan: government website	bit.ly/KyrgGovt
World Fact Book	bit.ly/WFBKyr
Silk Road Explore	bit.ly/SRKYrg
Russia: government website	bit.ly/RusGovt
Encyclopaedia Britannica	bit.ly/BritRus
Lonely Planet	bit.ly/LonPlanRus
Ukraine: government website	bit.ly/UkrGovt
World Travel Guide	bit.ly/WTGUkraine
National Geographic	bit.ly/NatGeoUkraine

Seventh-day Adventist

Euro-Asia Division	bit.ly/Euro-Asia
Caucasus Union Mission	bit.ly/SDACAUM
Far Eastern Union of Churches Mission	bit.ly/SDAFEUCM
Ukrainian Union Conference	bit.ly/UkrUnionConf
West Russian Union Conference	bit.ly/SDAWRUC

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.

Remind your Sabbath School members that their regular weekly mission offerings help the missionary work of the world church. A quarter of the Thirteenth Sabbath Offering will go directly to the projects in the Euro-Asia Division, while the rest will help mission work around the world. On the twelfth Sabbath, report on mission giving during the quarter. Encourage members to double or triple their normal mission giving on 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 Union of Churches Conference	66	28	3,837	9,467,000
Caucasus Union Mission	135	67	7,601	30,761,081
East Russian Union Mission	82	39	5,064	22,707,619
Far Eastern Union of Churches Mission	51	17	2,162	6,154,807
Moldova Union of Churches Conference	140	98	8,658	3,543,000
Southern Union Mission	70	45	4,050	111,642,000
Trans-Caucasus Union of Churches Mission	27	15	1,180	6,959,000
Ukrainian Union Conference	810	267	45,208	42,037,000
West Russian Union Conference	378	296	27,744	95,218,493
Crimea Mission	26	6	1,748	1,912,000
DIVISION TOTALS	1,785	878	107,252	330,402,000

PROJECTS

- 1 Construct three-story preschool, elementary school, and high school on the campus of Ukrainian Adventist Center of Higher Education in Bucha, Ukraine
- 2 Construct two-story preschool, elementary school, and high school on the campus of Zaoksky Adventist University in Tula region, Russia

