



YOUTH & ADULT MISSION

2018 • **QUARTER 1** • INTER-AMERICAN DIVISION



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On the Cover: Raquel Marrero Torres, 52, helps organize the Church Without Walls for homeless people in Puerto Rico. Read more on page 4.

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Your Offerings at Work

Three years ago, part of the Thirteenth Sabbath Offering helped repair the Good Samaritan Inn, a homeless shelter, and expand it into a free health clinic, in Kingston, Jamaica. Read about a homeless man who found God through the Good Samaritan Inn on page 26.



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This quarter we feature the Inter-American Division, which includes countries and territories in the Caribbean Sea, Central America, and the northern part of South America. The region is home to nearly 300 million people and has a Seventh-day Adventist membership of 3.7 million. That's a ratio of one Adventist for every 81 people.

This quarter's three Thirteenth Sabbath projects are in Puerto Rico, Trinidad, and Mexico and have one thing in common: a goal to make further inroads in sharing the gospel in their communities.

In Puerto Rico, the funds will help construct a multi-purpose facility that will accommodate 1,000 people for religious and missional activities on the campus of Antillean Adventist University.

In Trinidad, the University of the Southern Caribbean will receive its first church building, replacing an auditorium where people now gather for worship services. The University Church will have seating for 1,700 people and be furnished with facilities for Sabbath School, children ministries, a media ministry, a welfare ministry, mission outreach, a training center, and a fellowship hall.

In Mexico, Southeast Adventist Hospital will expand with a new seven-story building offering health services and disease prevention classes to the city of Villahermosa and the surrounding community.

You can watch a six-minute video about the projects at the link: bit.ly/iad-projects-2018.

Special Features

If you want to make your Sabbath School class come alive in a new way this quarter, visit our Facebook page at the link: facebook.com/missionquarterlies. Every week, we post additional photos and activities to go with each mission story. You could show the photos on PowerPoint, your computer, or a mobile device while you read the mission story, or you could print the photos to decorate your Sabbath School room or church bulletin board.

This adult and youth *Mission* quarterly contains just a sample of the thrilling mission stories that we have collected from the Inter-American Division. For more great stories, visit bit.ly/iad-archive, which will take you to all the division stories. At this link, you can also search for stories by country and theme.

You can download the PDF version of the *Mission* quarterly at bit.ly/adultmission, and *Mission Spotlight* videos at bit.ly/missionspotlight.

Check out the Leader's Resources on page 31 in this quarterly for helpful sources of additional information to enhance your mission presentations throughout the quarter.

If you have found especially effective ways to share mission stories, please let me know at mchessney@gc.adventist.org. Thank you for encouraging church members to be mission-minded!

Opportunities

The Thirteenth Sabbath Offering this quarter will help build:

- Center of evangelism, Antillean Adventist University, Mayaguez, Puerto Rico
- University church building, University of the Southern Caribbean, Maracas, Trinidad
- Seven-story community center, Southeast Adventist Hospital, Villahermosa, Mexico

Church Without Walls

PUERTO RICO | January 6

Raquel Marrero Torres, 52



A group of church members gathered in a Puerto Rican park at 5 a.m. Sabbath to pray, read the Bible, and eat a light breakfast. Little did they expect to be watched by homeless people when they were ejected from their usual spot one Sabbath and forced to meet in the city's central square instead.

The one-off move, however, changed the meetings permanently. Their monthly gathering has transformed into a weekly worship and breakfast for the homeless. Last Easter, a pastor led a special communion service with grape juice, bread, and foot washing.

"We call it the Church Without Walls," said Raquel Marrero Torres, the 52-year-old university math teacher who organizes the meal.

The Church Without Walls is one of the ways that Seventh-day Adventists

are seeking to share Jesus' love in their communities in Puerto Rico, a U.S. territory measuring just 100 miles by 35 miles (160 kilometers by 55 kilometers) in the Caribbean Sea. Some churches organize weekly meals on their premises, and others send members to clean and repair homes during the week.

Raquel's church group used to meet once a month in a park in Mayaguez, a city on Puerto Rico's west coast that is home to Antillean Adventist University. But a city-organized event forced them to relocate to the city square for one Sabbath in 2012. As they ate, one church member noticed several homeless people in the square and invited them to join the meal.

"From that day on, he decided to return and feed the homeless by himself every Sabbath," Raquel said.

The man, a small business owner in his fifties, took hot cereal, sandwiches, fresh fruit, and juice to the central square every Sabbath for several months. Then he told Raquel, "I want you to go. I don't want to just give them food. I also want them to hear about God."

Raquel, an active leader in her congregation, agreed to accompany him the next Sabbath.

Early Sabbath morning, she opened the Bible and read to about 35 men and women.

Raquel went regularly after that, and

she took over the task of organizing the meals in early 2017.

These days, 65 to 70 people show up at 7 a.m. every Sabbath to hear the Word of God and eat breakfast. The guests sit in chairs set up by the volunteers as they sing and listen to a pastor share a 20-minute message. The pastor recently led the group through the Discover Bible studies, and 40 people who completed the course were taken by chartered bus to a nearby Adventist church for a graduation ceremony.

Raquel is astonished that most attendees arrive by 7 a.m., even though they knew that the breakfast will start 45 minutes later.

“We started by giving food to the homeless, but now we have people who come because they want to hear God’s word,” she said. “They sit there and open their Bibles and sing. It’s amazing.”

The weekly gathering has become a family reunion.

“We laugh and cry,” Raquel said. “We have people who have passed away since we started the meetings, and we have wept for them. It’s like a family.”

Many of the attendees have Raquel’s cellphone number and call her if they fall

ill or have other needs during the week. Some attendees are no longer homeless after receiving apartments from the city. Church members helped them move into their new homes and to furnish them.

The breakfast program is funded by donations from church members and others. A student volunteer has a mother who works at a major international company, and the company donated backpacks filled with shampoo, soap, toothpaste, and towels to present to the female attendees on the Mother’s Day holiday and to the men on Father’s Day.

At Easter, the volunteers organized a first communion service on the city square. Communion dishes and tables were brought from the church, and the pastor explained the ritual. Many people wept as they washed each other’s feet.

“To them, washing their feet was like God washing away their sins,” Raquel said. “It was the first time that they had had that experience. It was beautiful.”

Raquel is unaware of anyone being baptized because of the program, but she is confident that the Holy Spirit is working on people’s hearts.

“We know that the seeds will grow,” she said. “We know that they love God.”

Among the program’s volunteers are students from Antillean Adventist University, which will receive part of this quarter’s Thirteenth Sabbath Offering. The funds will help open a center of influence and evangelism center at the university. Thank you for giving to the mission offering. 🌍

By Andrew McChesney

Watch a short YouTube video with Raquel at the link: bit.ly/raquel-torres

Mission Post

- The Puerto Rican Constitution grants its people freedom of religion. Seventy percent of the population identify as Catholic, with 25 percent being Protestant.
- The Puerto Rican Union Conference has 310 churches and a membership of 32,875. With a total population of 3,415,000, this means there is one member for every 104 people in Puerto Rico.



Blue Jeans

Kermyt Torres Castellano, 39

[Ask a man to read this first-person testimony.]

My father grew up in a Seventh-day Adventist home in Puerto Rico, but he left the church when someone criticized his fiancée for wearing blue jeans to church.

My father was 19 years old at the time, and he showed up on Sabbath with my future mother, who belonged to a Sunday-keeping denomination. My father grew furious when someone told my mother that she wasn't dressed appropriately, and he abandoned his faith.

I grew up in the home of a police officer. My father was a big, muscular SWAT officer, and he thought he was Superman. He liked to fight, smoke, and drink. He told my younger brother and me, "Only the strongest survive on the street. You need to be strong to survive."

The years passed, and my parents separated. When my father was 45, he was hospitalized in serious condition. The doctor said his intestines were rotting,

the likely result of a poor lifestyle. The doctor removed nine feet (three meters) of intestines.

While recovering from the surgery, my father suffered respiratory failure and could not breathe. In 45 seconds, his life passed before his eyes like a movie. He saw his sins and the many times that he had rejected Jesus' attempts to reach him. He was overcome with fear about the future. At that moment, he felt two big hands reach down from above, and he heard a voice say in his ear, "Don't worry. You are in my hands." He immediately began to breathe again.

After leaving the hospital, my father gave his life to Jesus and returned to the Adventist Church. But he was worried about his two sons. He prayed, "You have saved me, but what about my sons?"

At the time, I was a 27-year-old truck driver who smoked, drank, and was addicted to cocaine and heroin. My brother worshipped the devil. He wore black clothes and painted his lips,

fingernails, and eyes black. He had 32 piercings on his face. He painted the walls and ceiling of his bedroom black and listened to heavy metal music as he slept.

My father tried to give us Bible studies, but we weren't interested. He grew increasingly frustrated as we rebuffed his efforts to introduce us to Jesus. He changed his approach, however, after reading Isaiah 49:25, where the Lord says, "For I will contend with him who contends with you, and I will save your children" (NKJV).

My father put his sons in God's hands.

I didn't know God, and I didn't know that my father was praying for me. But an odd thing happened to me a short time later. On a Friday, I met with my friends, and we spent the weekend going from club to club, partying, like we did every weekend.

When I returned home on Monday, I felt a loathing for my lifestyle, and I longed for a better life. I prayed at 11 a.m., "Lord, you need to do something with my life because I'm going to die on the street of Puerto Rico or I'm going to contract a disease from a girl."

I don't know what Jesus did in me, but the next morning I felt different. I lost all desire for tobacco, alcohol, and drugs. I just wanted to serve Christ. I never used those substances again.

Ten years later, I'm a 39-year-old Adventist pastor in Puerto Rico. I'm married to a wonderful Adventist woman, and we have five children. My brother is serving God at an Adventist church in the U.S. city of Boston, and I had the privilege of baptizing my mother five years ago.

My father, who remarried, remains a faithful Adventist in Puerto Rico.

A long time ago, my father and I used

Fast Facts

- Christopher Columbus discovered Puerto Rico in 1493, one year after he discovered the Americas. He named it San Juan Bautista after John the Baptist.
- The food of Puerto Rico is spicy and is a mixture of Spanish, American, British, and African influences.
- Although Puerto Rico is a territory of the United States, it competes individually in the Olympics each year and has won nine medals total. Six medals were won in boxing, one in athletics, one in tennis, and one in wrestling.
- The streets in Puerto Rico are paved with blue cobblestones.
- Puerto Rico is home to the largest living reptile in the world—the leatherback sea turtle.

to joke that we would go to clubs and drink together when I grew up. But now we go to church together.

If Jesus can do this for us, He can do this for anyone.

Kermyt Torres Castellano has served as a pastor for seven years and is now studying for his master's degree in theology at Antillean Adventist University in Mayaguez, Puerto Rico. Part of this quarter's Thirteenth Sabbath Offering will help the university build a center of influence and evangelism center to reach out to the local community. 🌐

By Kermyt Torres Castellano, as told to Andrew McChesney

Read a story about Kermyt's experience at Antillean Adventist University on page 6 of the Children's Mission quarterly or online at the link: bit.ly/rice-and-beans

Britain's Queen and Heaven's King



BELIZE | January 20

Leticia August, 60

The most exciting day in the young life of Leticia [pronounced: let-EESIA] was when her mother sent her from Guatemala to live with her grandmother in neighboring Belize. Her parents were staunch Sunday-keepers, and Leticia was tired of being told that she couldn't behave like the other girls.

"When I moved, I said, 'Yes this is it!'" Leticia said.

She started going to dances and parties. She felt like free at last. But she worried almost every day, "What will happen to me if I die tonight?"

After some time, a couple of Adventists started visiting Leticia's home and giving Bible studies to her uncle, who also lived there. Leticia, who was 17, eavesdropped from her room and thought indignantly,

"That's not what the Bible teaches!"

The Adventists were speaking about the gift of tongues. They read from the book of Acts that everyone understood in their own language what the disciples preached. Leticia had been raised to believe that speaking in tongues produced gibberish that no one could understand.

Finally, Leticia burst out of her room and told the Adventists, "What you are teaching is not right." She tried to show them her way of thinking.

Through the discussion, Leticia began to study the Bible with the Adventists. Then she attended their church and decided to be baptized.

But her relatives dismissed the Adventist Church as a cult and told her, "If you ever decide to be baptized, forget that you have a family here."

Her baptism was a real struggle, and she did not show up on the day she was supposed to be baptized. She went partying instead and decided that she wouldn't be baptized.

Fast Facts

- English is the official language of Belize, and Belizean Kriol (Creole) is the unofficial language, although Spanish is the second-most common spoken language.
- Although Belize is independent, Britain's queen is still the symbolic head of state and holds the title "Queen of Belize."
- Although Belize City is the largest city, the capital of Belize is Belmopan after a hurricane nearly destroyed Belize City in 1961.
- The National Assembly building in Belmopan is designed to resemble a Mayan temple.
- Guatemala still claims Belize as Guatemalan territory, based in part on the Anglo-Guatemalan Treaty of 1859.
- Before Belize became independent, it was known as British Honduras.
- There are no fast food chains like McDonald's, KFC, and Burger King in Belize.

"But the Lord did not leave me until I went to ask for baptism," she said. "The pastor asked, 'Are you sure?' I was sure, and from that moment to now I am sure that I made the right choice. Praise God for His mercy and for giving me a second chance."

Leticia's relatives were furious. They pressured her to renounce her faith by putting pork or lard in the food so she couldn't eat it. Leticia lived on cookies and milk for weeks. She only ate a full meal on Sabbaths when church members invited her to their homes for lunch.

"That when I learned that you should always open your door to newly baptized

members because you never know what is happening in their lives," Leticia said. "Get to know them and love them."

Leticia soon returned to her mother in Guatemala. Even that move was blessed by God, she said. Shortly after her arrival, she met her future husband, and they were married. Leticia went on to become a nurse and to plant three churches in Guatemala and Belize with her husband. Together, the couple has led about 1,000 people to baptism.

Leticia's husband has since passed away, but she remains an active 60-year-old church member in Belize, where she now lives. In 2016, Britain's Queen Elizabeth II named her a Member of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire in recognition of her community service.

"Somebody submitted my name," Leticia said, modestly. "But really what inspires me to move forward is not the awards of people. I always imagine that God is saying, 'Go, do this for Me.' We are His servants. He says, 'Do it.' I want to hear Him say one day, 'Well done, good and faithful servant.'"

"I know that God called me for a purpose," she said. "It has been 43 years since I was called to the church, and His loves grows deeper and deeper every day."

Belize received part of the 2015 Thirteenth Sabbath Offering to build a campground for evangelistic meetings and church conferences. Thank you for supporting Belize and other countries in the Inter-American Division with your mission offering. 🌍

By Andrew McChesney

Watch a short YouTube video of Leticia singing at the link: bit.ly/leticia-august

Finding Their First Love



BELIZE | January 27

**James Pescascio, 62, and
Louise Pescascio, 65**

James and Louise grew up as childhood friends in the Central American country of Belize.

As adults, they immigrated to the United States to work. Louise operated various businesses in California for 30 years. James worked as an engineer for Motorola in California, Texas, and Illinois.

As they neared retirement age, they both moved back to Belize, renewed acquaintances, and discovered that they both were single. James soon asked Louise out on a date. Louise had one question.

“Who is first in your life?” she asked James.

“God,” he replied.

“Good, then we can talk,” she said.

Louise was eager to tell James what she was learning about the Sabbath. James had news of his own. The two began to talk.

Louise first heard about the Sabbath

at an evangelistic series in the United States, but she didn’t think much about it until she returned to Belize and opened a small hotel.

She began to study the Bible carefully. After reading about tithe, she started returning 10 percent of her income to God. After reading about sexual morality, she turned away unmarried couples who wanted rooms. Then she searched for information about the right day of worship. She wanted to keep going to church on Sunday, but she also wanted to obey the Bible.

“I searched the Bible for evidence that it was all right to keep Sunday,” she said in her home in Dangriga Town. “But the more I studied, the more the Lord showed me that the Sabbath was the true day of worship.”

Then Louise read Hebrews 4:4-11, which says that “God rested on the seventh day” and makes the appeal, “If you will hear His voice, do not harden your hearts” (NKJV).

“When I read that, I stopped and I said, ‘I have been asking God to show me if I can continue worshipping on Sunday and here it is!’” Louise said. “Now I had the proof.”

The knowledge presented a dilemma. Hotels are open seven days a week, and

Louise didn't know what to do. She placed Bibles and copies of Ellen White's "Steps to Christ" in every room. She stopped doing laundry and other routine work on Sabbath. But she didn't know if that was enough.

James, who was getting reacquainted with Louise after so many years, also didn't know what to do. But he said that it was important to pray and to listen for God's voice.

He told Louise that he once had been invited by his brother to go on a road trip from California to Belize. The night before their departure, he had stopped by a friend's house and expressed discomfort about going.

"Don't go," the friend said. "Listen to that internal voice."

But James felt obligated to go because he had promised his brother. Later that evening, his car refused to start, and he had to be towed to his brother's house.

"But I still didn't want to listen to that voice that said, 'Don't go on this trip,'" James said.

The brothers left in the morning. Partway through Mexico, a tire blew as James was behind the wheel. The vehicle rolled over, and the brother was thrown out. James suffered serious injuries to his face and arms, and he spent two days in a Mexican hospital. Days later, in Belize, he started seeing double and had to rush back to the United States for eye surgery.

The accident prompted a turn-around in James' life.

"I started going back to church and turned back to God," he said. "I realized that if I had listened to the voice, I wouldn't have had that trouble."

James and Louise realized that they both were seeking God's will and decided to get married. They went to church every

Mission Post

- According to the latest national census, 40.1 percent of Belizeans are Roman Catholics and 31.8 percent are Protestants.
- Belize has 92 churches and 40 companies with 43,500 members. With a total population of 388,000, 11 percent of Belizeans are Adventist.
- The Adventist message was introduced into Belize (then British Honduras) through Adventist publications. Around 1885, Mrs. E. Gauterau, from Honduras, who had been converted while in California, distributed publications in both counties.

Sabbath and grew increasingly convinced that they needed to leave the hotel business. But how?

"Then God did a very wonderful thing for us," Louise said.

One day, Louise mentioned casually to a U.S. business client that she hadn't taken a vacation in 20 years and really could use a break. The very next day, the client offered to take over the hotel.

Louise and James have been baptized and are now leaders of the local Adventist church. They praise God for giving them the Sabbath as a day of rest and worship every week.

"What happened with our business was nothing short of a miracle," Louise said. 🌍

By Andrew McChesney

Watch short videos of the couple sharing their faith on YouTube. James is at the link: bit.ly/james-pescascia, and Louise is at the link: bit.ly/louise-pescascia

Top Chef Gives Up All

BELIZE | February 3

Mercedes Ruiz, 54



Mercedes Ruiz was a busy woman. Six days a week, she worked as a chef for the Radisson hotel and prepared meals for first-class passengers on American Airlines. On Sundays, she went to church—and not just one church but three different churches.

Mercedes, a native Mayan living in the Central American country of Belize, longed to grow closer to God. But she felt empty inside even after the three church services.

She turned to the Bible and started to study Daniel. Reaching chapter 9, she noticed that Daniel fasted and prayed as a servant of God.

“Lord,” Mercedes prayed, “if Daniel can do it, You can help me do it, too.”

She fasted and prayed. Every day, she repeated the lengthy prayer of Daniel in Daniel 9, which concludes with the plea, “O Lord, hear! O Lord, forgive! O Lord, listen and act! Do not delay for Your own

sake, my God, for Your city and Your people are called by Your name” (Daniel 9:19; NKJV).

One Sunday afternoon after the triple church services, Mercedes saw several flyers scattered on the sidewalk. She picked one up and saw that it advertised a Seventh-day Adventist evangelistic series that opened that very night.

She went to the meeting—and didn’t miss a night afterward. On Sabbath, she took a vacation day from work and went forward when the preacher asked who wished to be baptized.

Her supervisor was upset when she announced on Monday that she would no longer work on Saturdays.

“You didn’t have a problem before with Saturday,” the supervisor said. “Did you murder someone or commit some other crime? Why do you have to do this?”

“I believe that this is the day of the Lord,” Mercedes replied. “I want to get closer to Him.”

Without the supervisor’s support, Mercedes decided that she had to resign. She wrote a resignation letter and handed it to the company director, who was above her supervisor.

The director read the letter, crumbled it up into a wad, and threw it into the trash.

“Let’s pretend that you never gave this to me,” he said. “I’m going to give you Saturdays off, and I’m going to give you a raise.”

Fast Facts

- Belize has the lowest population density in Central America, with only 39 people per square mile, or 15 people per square kilometer.
- The Belize Rainforest is home to more than 500 species of orchid.
- Belize's black howler monkeys are one of the top 10 loudest animals in the world.
- Cashew trees are found in the forests in Belize. Cashews are a seed that grows out of a fruit called a cashew apple. The cashew apple is edible, but the skin around the cashew itself is toxic and must be removed before eating.

The supervisor was furious upon learning that Mercedes no longer had to work on Saturdays. She ordered Mercedes to do extra work and gave her tight deadlines to complete the tasks. Mercedes cried out to God to give her strength.

One day, Mercedes arrived at work to learn that the supervisor was dead. The supervisor, who was married with children, had gone to the seashore with another man the previous evening. Their romantic rendezvous had been shattered by armed robbers fleeing a crime scene. In making their getaway, the robbers had shot dead the couple and stolen their car.

Peace returned to Mercedes' workplace.

"I enjoyed every Sabbath and my workdays as well," she said.

But that was just the beginning of Mercedes' story. A few years later, Mercedes found herself alone after her husband died and her adult children moved out. She recommitted her life to Jesus and asked the pastor for a Bible study.

When the pastor promised to stop

by her home on a Friday evening, Mercedes thought, "If this Bible study is good enough for me, I want to share it with someone else." So, she invited her neighbors to attend. She raised a tent in her front yard, placed chairs inside, and prepared delicious refreshments. She set up a table for the pastor at the front of the tent.

The pastor was surprised to see a crowd of people waiting for him on Friday evening. When the Bible study ended, the pastor announced that another Bible study would be held the next Friday night. It was Mercedes turned to be surprised. She thought that the Bible study was only for one night.

The crowd grew with each subsequent Bible study. There was no Adventist church in the town, so Mercedes turned her home into a house-church where her neighbors could worship on Sabbath. Sixteen people were baptized through the Bible studies. Mercedes helped plant the town's first standalone Adventist church a year later.

But she wanted to do still more, and she especially longed to reach her native Mayan people with the gospel. So, she became a Global Mission pioneer, a missionary who plants churches in unentered regions. Mercedes now leads a growing Maya congregation in Belize's capital, Belmopan. "That's how I got involved in missionary work," said Mercedes, 54. "I love to do missionary work. It's a life of commitment, and I am happily doing it." 🌍

By Andrew McChesney

Watch a short YouTube video of Mercedes at the link: bit.ly/mercedes-ruiz

Wife's Prayer Answered

BELIZE | February 10

Olga Chee, 39, and
Johnny Chee, 70



The first time that Olga Chee asked her husband, Johnny, if he would go with her to the Seventh-day Adventist church, he replied sharply, "I'll go with you to any church except that one!"

Johnny thought the Adventist Church was a cult, and he rejected a second request from Olga a few weeks later.

Olga and Johnny were looking for a church in Orange Walk, a town of 15,000 people in the Central American country of Belize. Neither was particularly religious, but Olga had been overcome with a desire to go to church.

The couple went with friends to a conservative Sunday church several times, but something didn't feel right. "Whenever we came out of church, our lives were still the same," Olga said. "We gambled with our friends, and my husband drank. I felt an emptiness that I didn't understand."

Behind their house lived an Adventist couple. The wife came to the fence and talked and prayed with Olga. She twice invited Olga and her three children to church, and that was when Olga asked Johnny if he would go with them.

Finally, Olga wound up at a liberal Sunday church, and Johnny fell in love with the church members. They attended the church for nearly five years.

But then Olga and Johnny began to feel once again that something was lacking in their lives. They prayed to God for help.

A few days later, a relative called Johnny, who owned several small businesses, to ask for help with a pizza restaurant on the other side of the country.

After he left, Olga prayed, "God, if it is Your will for us to move, please give me a sign. Let the sign be that I don't take anything from the house except the children and the clothes on my back." She didn't tell anyone about her prayer.

Four weeks passed, and Johnny called Olga to announce that she and the children were moving.

"Don't worry," he said. "You will have everything: a home, school for the children, and all the furniture. You will have everything you need except electricity."

It sounded like the answer to her prayer, so Olga moved with the children. She found a church belonging to the same denomination as in her old town. A Bible

verse at the front of the church caught her attention. It read: “Today, if you will hear His voice, do not harden your hearts” (Hebrews 3:15; NKJV).

Olga read the verse every Sunday for six months. After that, Johnny finished his pizza work, and the family moved back to Orange Walk. Olga and Johnny returned to their old church, but something didn’t seem right.

One morning, Olga turned on the radio and heard Adventist evangelist Doug Batchelor speaking about the Sabbath.

“For some reason, my heart lit up as he spoke,” Olga said. “Then I remembered the Bible verse about not hardening my heart. I knew that I had to act.”

Olga found Johnny working in a restaurant that he had opened recently.

“What do you think about the Sabbath?” she asked.

Johnny angrily yelled at her, “I don’t want to hear anything about the Sabbath! Sabbath can be a Wednesday, a Friday, or any other day. It doesn’t matter.”

Olga backed off. “If we are going to argue about this, then it is not from God,” she said. “Let’s leave it for now.”

That afternoon, Olga knelt in the restaurant kitchen and said, “God, if it is Your will to keep the Sabbath, make my husband come with me to church. You created the family, and You don’t want to break up my family.”

Olga went to bed at 9 o’clock that night. When she got up to use the bathroom at 1 a.m., she noticed that Johnny was sitting in front of the computer and had an open Bible on the table. He was searching for something. Johnny didn’t say a word, and Olga went back to bed.

Fast Facts

- Belizean cuisine is a blend of all the different cultures in the country—it is similar to both Mexican/Central American and Jamaican/Anglo-Caribbean cuisines.
- The national flower is the black orchid, and the national bird is the keel-billed toucan.
- More than 400 species of fish live in the waters of Belize’s 185-mile-long (300-kilometer-long) barrier reef.
- Belize has the only jaguar reserve in the world, known as Cockscomb Basin Wildlife sanctuary.

In the morning when Olga got up to go to work, Johnny said, “You know what? I’m totally convinced that we need to worship God on the Sabbath.”

Olga was shocked! She asked her husband to explain why he had changed his mind. He told her that he had turned on the television after she had gone to bed. He had ended up watching a program with Doug Batchelor.

“Doug Batchelor was preaching about the Ten Commandments and how people were being misled about the Fourth Commandment,” Johnny said. “That led me to start a deeper research into the Bible that night.”

Olga and Johnny went to the Adventist church the next Sabbath and have never looked back. 🌍

By Andrew McChesney

Watch short videos of Olga and Johnny on YouTube. Watch Olga at the link: bit.ly/olga-chee, and Johnny at the link: bit.ly/johnny-chee



No Stale Food

Sadie McKenzie, 63

Sadie [pronounced: SAY-dee] worried what her husband, Marcus, would say when he found out that she wanted to be baptized at an evangelistic series in Belize.

She had attended the meetings every night, but Marcus had refused to go. She knew he wouldn't like her decision because it meant she would stop dancing, drinking, and going to parties with him.

Sadie waited until Thursday night, two days before her baptism, to break the news. She knew just when she wanted to make the announcement. Marcus always stretched out an arm after lying down in bed, and Sadie always rested her head against it. So, Sadie waited until her head was comfortably resting on his arm before speaking.

"I'm going to be baptized on Sabbath," she said, softly.

Marcus immediately yanked away his arm, and his face darkened with anger.

"I'll leave you," he said. "If you get baptized, you'll have to live with the Adventists."

He raged for a while, and Sadie listened until he paused. Then she spoke.

"If you leave me, God is going to make me happy without you," she said.

Marcus didn't say another word and rolled over to sleep.

The next day, Marcus grumbled about the trials that he thought he would face with an Adventist wife. "I don't want to eat stale food on Saturdays," he said. "I don't want to eat food made on Friday."

Sadie said, "If you don't want stale food, I will make you food that will keep."

The answer didn't satisfy him. "If you go through with this, I'll beat you the next time I see you," he said.

Sadie was scared, and she asked people at the evangelistic meetings to pray for her. She also prayed for God's protection.

Marcus wasn't home when she returned from her baptism on Sabbath. But her heart began to pound when he walked in the front door. She was sure that he was going to beat her.

Instead, Marcus hugged her and said, "So, you're a new woman now." He quickly added, "I will never go to the Adventist Church as long as I live."

"That's your choice," Sadie replied. "God gives everyone freedom to choose. But when you get to the end of the road, don't blame me. I showed you the way."

Life went on as normal after the

Fast Facts

- More than half the population of Belize are bilingual, and a large proportion are multilingual.
- Belize's economy depends on the export of petroleum and agricultural items such as sugar and bananas, although tourism is expanding rapidly.

baptism except Marcus complained about his Sabbath meals. He wanted Sadie to cook for him on Saturday and accused her of disobeying him. He refused to eat the food that she prepared and instead went to a bar near the Adventist church to eat. He also drank there while she was in church and greeted her with a drunken hug when she walked past on her way home.

Sadie prayed for God to touch her husband's heart. She began ironing his best clothes every Friday so he would have something to wear to church.

One Friday, Marcus agreed to go to church the next day. But that night he went to the movies and then a bar.

Shortly after he returned home, a powerful earthquake shook the house. Marcus was terrified, and he fell to the floor. "God," he cried out. "Spare my life and give me a second chance."

Sadie spoke sternly to her husband.

"Just like when the earthquake comes and no one knows it's coming, Jesus also will come," she said. "You won't be prepared."

The house shook for what seemed like an eternity, and Marcus cried the whole time. A neighbor saw him crying through the house's open door.

When the earthquake stopped, Marcus began to have second thoughts.

"I'm not going to church because people will say I came because of the earthquake," he said.

"Don't worry about what people think," Sadie said. "A lot of people will not be in heaven because they worried about what people thought."

Marcus went to church.

A short time later, an evangelistic series was held in the village, and Sadie invited her husband to go. But he drank instead. The second night he was drunk again. On the third night, she told him, "If you go with your friends instead of me, it means you love them more than me. If that's your decision, you can stay with them."

Marcus attended the meetings and went forward for the altar call. Sadie didn't dare hope that he would be baptized until she saw him come out of the water. "I wept," she said. "I couldn't believe it."

Sadie and Marcus became faithful church leaders in Belize. Sadie, who is now 63, has led six evangelistic campaigns that resulted in more than 50 baptisms. Hundreds more have joined the church through her and Marcus' influence.

Part of the 2015 Thirteenth Sabbath Offering went to build a campground where the Adventist Church can hold regular evangelistic meetings in Belize. Thank you for your mission offering. 🌍

By Andrew McChesney

Read Sadie's conversation story on page 24 of the Children's Mission quarterly, which can be downloaded at the link: bit.ly/childrensmision

Watch a short video of Sadie at the link: bit.ly/sadie-mckenzie

A Second Chance

MEXICO | February 24

Ezequiel Perez Gongora, 34



[Ask a man to read this first-person testimony.]

I started to drink after getting married at the age of 20, and then I started to smoke. Soon I was an alcoholic and a chain smoker. I loved going to parties.

My wife was baptized after attending an evangelistic series by a pastor named Richard Perez at a Seventh-day Adventist church near my home in the Mexican state of Tabasco. But I refused to get baptized. Twice.

My lifestyle took a toll on my body after 13 years, and my back began to ache badly. I went to the local medical services, and they gave me medicine that didn't help. The next day, I went to the Southeast Adventist Hospital. Doctors ran a battery of X-rays, blood tests, and other exams, but they couldn't find anything wrong.

My back pain worsened, and I developed a high temperature.

On the fourth day in bed, the hospital chaplain came to see me. It was pastor Richard Perez. He recognized me immediately and greeted me by name.

"This is the time that you need God," he told me.

He took his guitar and sang two songs. After that, he read the Bible to me. At that moment, I realized that God truly loved me.

Before leaving, the pastor asked the nurses to worship with me on Sabbath, which they did.

I felt terrible. The pain was intense, and my temperature remained high.

On the seventh day, the doctor came into my room with a worried expression on his face. He told me that we needed to have a private talk, so I asked my wife to leave the room.

"You have all the symptoms of AIDS,"

the doctor said. “Just to confirm this, I’m going to take a test.”

After the test, the doctor left and my wife returned. She asked what was going on. I couldn’t answer her. I wasn’t sure myself. I knew that I had lived badly, and maybe this was the reason for my illness.

Then I remembered the words of the pastor. He had said, “This is the time that you need God.”

I asked my wife to step out of the room because I wanted to pray. I prayed and cried. I asked God for another chance, and I asked Him to help me not have AIDS.

After a while, the doctor returned to the room.

“I have good news and bad news,” he said. “The good news is you don’t have AIDS. The bad news is I don’t know what you have.”

I knew that God had answered my prayer because my test results were negative.

Another test showed that I had pleural effusion, a build-up of fluid between the tissues that line the lungs and the chest. The doctor inserted tubes to drain the fluid and said I might be able go home in five days.

But I felt as bad as before after five days, and a subsequent test found a tumor.

“I have to warn you,” the doctor said. “Only a miracle can save you.”

An emergency surgery was scheduled for the next day. I prayed again. I pleaded with God to give me a chance to redeem my wasted life.

On the day of the operation, I was left in the operating room as the anesthetic set in. I prayed, “If you let me live, I will get baptized and give my life to You.”

The surgery lasted six hours. When I woke up, I was back in my room. My wife

Fast Facts

- 123 million people live in Mexico.
- The peninsula to the west of mainland Mexico is called Baja California and is the largest peninsula in the world. More than 120 species of cactus grow there.
- The emblem on the Mexican shows an eagle standing on a cactus with a snake in the beak. A legend says the Aztec settled and built their capital city, Tenochtitlan (today’s Mexico City) on the place where they saw an eagle sitting on a cactus, eating a snake.
- Mexico is the largest Spanish-speaking country in the world.
- Mexico is the world’s largest producer of silver.
- Mexico produces the most automobiles of any North American nation.

and daughters were waiting to talk to me. I was convinced that God had given me another chance.

After 21 days, I finally left the hospital. Three weeks after that, the church held another evangelistic series, and I was baptized. Now I work as a custodian and serve as the head deacon at the church.

Praise God for second chances! I will serve Him for the rest of my life.

Part of this quarter’s Thirteenth Sabbath Offering will help the Southeast Adventist Hospital in Villahermosa, Mexico, expand with a building that will offer new health services to the community. Thank you for your mission offering. 🌍

By Ezequiel Perez Gongora, as told to Andrew McChesney

Surprises With God



MEXICO | March 3

Laura del Carmen Flores Dias, 23

Laura's life has been filled with surprises in Mexico.

When she was 10 years old, she went to a friend's house expecting a big party. Instead, she wound up at a small-group Bible study. She liked the Bible studies so much that she attended for a year and then started going to the Seventh-day Adventist church on Sabbath.

When she asked to be baptized after the church conducted an evangelistic series, the church members replied with excuses. They said that she needed more Bible studies, that her parents were not Adventists, and that she was only 11. But in the end, she was baptized.

When Laura finished high school, she wanted to enter an Adventist university but lacked the money for the tuition. Her desire to learn from Adventist teachers only grew when her pastor told

her that Adventist universities offered Bible classes. She began to dream about becoming a Bible teacher.

Laura made a deal with God. She prayed, "If You let me study at an Adventist university, I will become a high school Bible teacher. But if You don't let me study, I will work now, get married, and study later."

God answered her prayer to go to school. She was accepted into an Adventist university even though she only had enough to pay for half the tuition of the first semester. She worked as a housekeeper to earn extra money. The next semester, she received a full scholarship, and four years later she graduated with a degree in family science and without any debt.

Seeing how God had answered her prayer, Laura decided to keep her promise to become a high school Bible teacher. But

Fast Facts

- Frida Kahlo is one of the most famous Mexican artists of the 20th century.
- Mexico has a variety of climates, ranging from tropical to desert.
- The highest peak in Mexico is a volcano that is 18,491 feet (5,636 meters) high and called Pico Orizaba. It is the third largest in North America.
- Chitzen Itza is a Mayan pyramid and a World Heritage Site, visited by more than 1 million people every year.
- In Mexico, there are jaguars, pumas, and huge iguanas. In the jungles of southern Mexico, you can encounter various types of lizards, monkeys, and colorful birds, such as parrots. Whales, manta rays, and manatees are common in the oceans and can sometimes be spotted off the Yucatan coast.
- Mexicans take sports seriously. In ancient times, losers of a ritual ball game were once put to death. In some dangerous sports, like bullfighting and rodeo (which was invented in Mexico), competitors still put their lives on the line.

she needed to get a master's degree first, and again she had no money for tuition.

Laura sent letters seeking a scholarship to two Adventist universities. Both wrote back that she should work as a literature evangelist to pay for her tuition.

Laura didn't mind working, but she wanted an indication from God about which university to choose. She knew it was difficult to find a job that would cover her full tuition, so she prayed, "I'll go to

the university where You give me a job."

Four days after graduating with her undergraduate degree, Laura received a letter from Adventist-owned Navojoa University. "We have a job for you, and you can enroll anytime," the letter said.

Laura didn't have the money to travel to the university, but when her classmates heard about her plight, they pooled their money to cover the cost.

Laura is now a graduate student at Navojoa University and looking forward to teaching the Bible to high school students.

Her favorite Bible verse is James 1:12, which says, "Blessed is the man who endures temptation; for when he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him" (NKJV)

"We have many trials as young people," she said. "But we always can overcome them with God's help. God will give to those who love Him the ability to overcome all trials."

Laura's life has been filled with surprises, and she likes it that way.

Her advice to other students who don't have money for an Adventist education is to trust God.

"God is the owner of everything," she said. "He will provide not only what you need but even more than that if you trust Him."

Part of this quarter's Thirteenth Sabbath Offering will help the Seventh-day Adventist hospital in Laura's hometown of Villahermosa expand with a building that will offer new health services to the community. Thank you for your mission offering. 🌍

By Andrew McChesney



A Scrappy Dog

Shanelle Octave, 22

[Ask a young woman to read this first-hand testimony.]

Dozens of students from the University of the Southern Caribbean in Trinidad and Tobago go door to door selling books every summer to pay tuition fees. Many of those students work in the Caribbean, but I joined a group of 10 students who flew to Canada.

I arrived in Ponoka, a town in the province of Alberta, and was paired up with a student from Romania who spoke little English. We each took one side of the street on a rainy Friday. After several hours, I could see the frustration in his eyes.

“Do you need help?” I asked as we headed to our last street for the day.

He shook his head. We prayed and set out to finish the street.

At the first house, a man slammed the door in the Romanian student’s face. For some reason, I found it funny and laughed. Then I saw how sad my companion looked, so I apologized and said, “Let’s do one door together.”

We went to his side of the street, prayed, and approached the next house. I knocked on the door and received an immediate response: the fierce yapping of a small dog. Dog owners don’t like it when their pets bark loudly, and they usually refuse to buy books. Sure enough, the woman who opened the door didn’t look happy to see us. The scruffy dog at her feet also wasn’t happy, and it continued to bark.

I tried to pay no attention to the dog and held out a health book called *Plants That Heal*. As I spoke, it struck me that this woman was about to reject me because her dog wouldn’t be quiet. So, I said to the dog, “Scruffy, what’s wrong? Why are you making so much noise? Is it because I am a stranger?”

The woman immediately asked, “Have you been to my home before?”

The question confused me. “No,” I said. “I have never been to this house before.”

“Then how did you know about Scruffy?” she asked.

I told her that I didn’t know her dog.

The woman invited us in. “Scruffy was the name that I gave my previous dog,” she said. “He died right on the spot where you were standing.”

Her words surprised me, and I expressed sympathy over her loss.

Fast Facts

- Three of the top five hottest chili peppers in the world come from Trinidad—the Trinidad Moruga Scorpion, the Douglah, and the Trinidad Scorpion “Butch T.” The world’s largest piece of brain coral can be found at Speyside, Tobago, and it measures 10 feet by 16 feet (3 meters by 5 meters), or the size of a truck.
- In 2006, Trinidad and Tobago became the smallest country ever to qualify for soccer’s World Cup.
- Trinidadian physician Joseph Lennox Pawan discovered the transmission of rabies by vampire bats to humans in 1933, leading to the development of a vaccine for the virus.
- Trinidad and Tobago is the only country whose capital city is named after another country: Port of Spain.
- Calypso music, steel drum bands, and limbo dancing all originated in Trinidad and Tobago.

The woman asked what we were doing out in the rain. I smiled and I pulled out the book, *Peace Above the Storm*, a retitled edition of Ellen White’s *Steps to Christ*. I told her about the book.

Just when the woman was asking about the book’s price, her husband came home. I turned to him and said, “Sir, how are you doing today? I’m Shanelle. What is your name?”

“John,” he said.

“No way!” I said.

“Why ‘no way?’” the woman asked.

“That’s my father’s name!” I said.

The woman hugged me and asked where I was from. When I told her that I was born on the island of Saint Lucia,

she burst into tears. “We’re going to Saint Lucia on our next vacation,” she said.

She asked me to tell her about the island as she looked for her purse.

“I don’t usually talk with salespeople at my door, but you have to be my angel,” she said. “You called my dog Scruffy by name, you are from the very island where I plan to go next, and your father’s name is the same as my husband’s. And you have a pleasant smile. Are you sure you aren’t an angel?”

I smiled and said I was quite sure that I was just Shanelle.

The woman bought both books and asked me to autograph them. I added a Bible promise beside my name in *Peace Above the Storm*. The woman held the book tightly against her chest.

As we left the house, my Romanian partner was amazed and said, “Shanelle, how did you do it? She was about to reject you, but instead you sold two books.”

I gave him the money and said, “It was God.”

As we continued down the street, the woman came out of her house and called out, “I still think you’re an angel! Thank you for the awesome books. I will share them with my daughter.”

I was so happy that I could have stopped canvassing right then and there. My goal was met for that day. I had reached one life for Jesus.

Shanelle Octave, 22, is an accounting major at the University of the Southern Caribbean in Trinidad and Tobago. Part of this quarter’s Thirteenth Sabbath Offering will help the university built its first church building. Thank you for supporting mission! 🌍

By Shanelle Octave

Sewing for Jesus



JAMAICA | March 17

Mavis Burrell Spencer, 66

Fourth Commandment to “remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy” applies to all Christians today.

Things began to change after a family friend invited her to weekly Bible studies. The friend, an Adventist business owner, had prayed regularly with her husband before he died, and Mavis had turned down his earlier invitations to attend church, saying she was too busy. But then he invited her to the small-group Bible studies and called her every week to remind her to come.

Mavis was astonished to discover how little she knew about the Bible.

“Everything began to open up to me in the Bible,” Mavis said. “I said at one lesson, ‘I didn’t know all these things were in the Bible!’”

In addition to the Sabbath truth, she didn’t realize that Jesus was coming soon and would take the righteous home. She was amazed by the Bible’s description of the New Earth.

“The more that was explained to me, the more that I wanted to hear,” Mavis said.

But she continued to operate her tailor shops on Sabbath. Then one evening as she drove home from the Bible study, she felt like a voice was telling her, “You can run, but you can’t hide.”

Mavis began to pray earnestly about the Sabbath.

“I was not fully accepting what I was

Mavis Burrell Spencer wasn’t sure what to do with her husband’s high-end tailoring business when he died a decade ago.

Her husband had established three, flourishing tailor shops in Jamaica, including a main outlet with 25 employees in a shopping center in the island’s capital, Kingston.

Mavis saw that she was at a crossroads, and she ultimately decided to run the business by herself.

Ten years later, Mavis found herself at a crossroads again. She wanted to be baptized into the Seventh-day Adventist Church, and Saturday was her busiest day at work. She prayed earnestly about what to do.

Mavis, who had attended a Sunday church on and off, first heard about the seventh-day Sabbath from Adventist friends. But she didn’t know that the

Fast Facts

- In 1988, Jamaica was the first tropical country to send a bobsledding team to the Winter Olympics
- Jamaica is home to more than 200 species of exotic orchid, 73 of which are indigenous.
- Jamaica's Kingston Harbor is the seventh-largest natural harbor in the world.
- Jamaica is home to the fastest man in the world, Usain Bolt.

learning," she said. "I believe that the Lord was saying to me that I was running away from Him but I couldn't hide, no matter what happened."

In December 2016, she made her decision. She posted a notice on the doors of her three shops that read, "Effective January 7, Spencer's Tailoring Establishment will be closed on Saturdays." Instead, the shops would be open on Sundays.

Mavis was baptized on January 7.

Several clients complained angrily about the shops being closed.

"How could you do this?" said one.

"Saturday is the most productive day, so why are you closing?" said another one.

Mavis replied patiently, "My Father in heaven tells me that 1,000 cattle on the hills belong to Him, so it is nothing for Him to give 10 of them to me."

Even though her shops were closed on Saturdays, they began to prosper. Clients started to praise her decision to work on Sunday. Big crowds at the shopping center where her main shop was located made it difficult to find parking on Saturdays, but the shopping center was quiet on Sundays.

"My sales are going up," Mavis said. "A lot of people who usually came during the week or on Saturday have found it more convenient to come on Sunday. They like not having to wrestle for parking."

Even more important than money, Mavis said, is the reality that she has gained a new family at church. She will long remember the warm reception that she received when she first went to church on Sabbath.

"It was like a gate opened," she said. "Everyone rushed at me. I can't believe that people are so loving and so kind. I have never been so happy in all my life."

These days, Mavis, who is 66, prays with her staff before opening every morning. She asks God to bless the customers and to give the staff strength and love for one another. She said her employees used to argue and compete, but now a sense of calm and unity has come over her business.

She also has invited employees to attend the small-group Bible studies, and one of them is preparing for baptism.

Asked what advice she has for business owners thinking about keeping the Sabbath, she said, "You have nothing to lose. You only have to gain when you give it all to the Lord."

Her favorite Bible verse is Philippians 4:13, which says, "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me" (NKJV).

"Keep your eyes on Jesus because He is the source of life," she said. "Without Him, you have nothing. With Him, you can do everything." 🌐

By Andrew McChesney

Watch a short YouTube video of Mavis at the link: bit.ly/mavis-spencer

Adopted by God

Raglan Waite, 50



Today's story is from Raglan Waite, the 50-year-old caretaker of the Good Samaritan Inn, a Seventh-day Adventist center that assists the homeless in Kingston, Jamaica.

I grew up in a children's home and was adopted into a Sunday-keeping home at age of six. My adopted parents died when I was 17, and I had little food to eat. Desperate to find a way to survive, I began looking for my biological parents.

I returned to the children's home, and I learned the name of my biological mother. But no one would tell me where she lived.

Next, I went to the local Poor Relief Department, a government agency responsible for identifying and assisting the destitute. The woman working there told me that my mother and other members of my biological family were on the list of people receiving assistance. She even said my biological brother was at my high school. She declined to give additional information, citing privacy concerns. But she promised to contact my

brother so he could find me if he wished.

One day I was watching a soccer match and one of the high school teachers touched my shoulder. He said, "Are you Raglan? We are brothers."

I was so happy!

Carl was seven years older than me, and he wanted to take me home.

I packed up my few belongings and moved to my new home. I saw my mother for the first time. She suffered a mental illness and didn't seem to recognize me. But I was glad to finally meet her.

My brother was a Seventh-day Adventist, and he invited me to go to church with him on Sabbath.

Church members helped me a lot. I could not read well, and they taught me to read and write with the Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide. They helped me attend a summer course at the Adventist university, where I learned how to give Bible studies.

By the age of 22, I was married, had a child, and was working at a gas station in

Fast Facts

- About a quarter of Jamaica's economy relies on tourism, with more than 1 million international tourists visiting every year.
- Jamaica is the largest English-speaking island in the Caribbean, although most people speak Jamaican Patois, an English-based Creole.
- Jamaica achieved independence from the United Kingdom in 1962 but remained part of the Commonwealth, so Queen Elizabeth II remains queen and head of state.
- Protestants make up 70 percent of the population of Jamaica, and Adventists are the second-largest denomination after the Church of God. One in every nine Jamaicans is Adventist.

the tourist resort of Montego Bay. I also was an ordained elder and active in the church. Church leaders asked me to open a branch Sabbath School in a rural area that once had had a strong Adventist presence. We tore out pages from Sabbath School study guides and distributed them to former church members as a way of outreach. That's how poor we were. We reclaimed 50 former church members.

My personal life began to fall apart when I was 36. I divorced and got remarried. After a dispute with a church leader, I walked away from the church. I continued to keep the Sabbath, but worshipped at home.

Three years ago, I moved across the island to Jamaica's capital, Kingston, and set up a business with a partner. My wife stayed with relatives in another town as I

tried to get the business up and running. But the business collapsed after my partner and I had an argument, and I struggled to find another job. Eventually, I lost my home, and pride kept me from turning to my wife and other relatives for help. I slept on the street for three months.

One day, I sat in a park, talking with another homeless man about where I could take a bath, get a change of clothes, and find some food. He told me, "Go to the Good Samaritan Inn, and they will give you a meal."

I said, "I want to go there!"

The people at the Good Samaritan Inn were kind to me, and they fed me and gave me a change of clothing. Soon I learned that the Good Samaritan Inn was owned by the Seventh-day Adventist Church and run by church members.

I started coming to the Good Samaritan Inn regularly, and I felt compelled to give something back. So, I started cleaning the yard. Then I began attending the Adventist Church again, and I was rebaptized.

Today, I am 50 years old and the caretaker of the Good Samaritan Inn. I have my own office and living quarters here. I have reconciled with my second wife.

It was tough on the street. It is good to be adopted— and readopted— by God.

Part of the 2015 Thirteenth Sabbath Offering went to renovate the Good Samaritan Inn in Kingston, Jamaica, and expand its work to include a free medical and dental center for the homeless.

Thank you for helping the Good Samaritan Inn reach out to people like Raglan. 🌍

By Raglan Waite, as told to Andrew McChesney

Thirteenth Sabbath Program

➤	Congregational Song	“Tis Love That Makes Us Happy” <i>Seventh-day Adventist Hymnal</i> , No. 579
➤	Welcome	Superintendent or Sabbath School teacher
➤	Prayer	
➤	Program	“Catering for Christ”
➤	Offering	While the offering is being taken, ask the children to sing “He’s Got the Whole World in His Hands” in Spanish (see page 31 in the <i>Children’s Mission</i> quarterly, which can be downloaded at: bit.ly/childrensmision).
➤	Closing Song	“I’ll Go Where You Want Me to Go” <i>Seventh-day Adventist Hymnal</i> , No. 573
➤	Closing Prayer	

Participants: Interviewer and a young man and woman to present the story in the format of a Q&A interview.

[Note: Participants don’t need to memorize their parts, but they should be familiar enough with the material that they do not have to read everything from the script. Practice so that participants can feel comfortable adding inflection where appropriate. You can also view a short YouTube video of Junior and Stephanie Roberts at the link: bit.ly/junior-roberts]

Catering for Christ

Interviewer: This quarter we have met people from Puerto Rico, Mexico, Jamaica, Trinidad and Tobago, and Belize, which are all countries in the Inter-American Division. Today we will meet a special young married couple from Belize.

Junior and Stephanie Roberts own and operate a catering company in Kingston, the capital of Jamaica. They ran into trouble when they were baptized and changed their business model. They

stopped serving lobster and liquor, and turned down lucrative contracts on Friday nights and Saturdays.

Let’s start with some background. Could you first tell us your ages?

Junior: I am 28.

Stephanie: And I am 27.

Interviewer: How did you meet?

Junior: We both worked at a major meat

and alcohol company in Jamaica. I was a chef, and I created recipes using shrimp, lobster, and other seafood.

Stephanie: I worked as assistant manager in the wine and spirits department. I personally loved wine.

Interviewer: How did you learn about the Seventh-day Adventist Church?

Junior: Three years ago, an Adventist friend invited me to small-group Bible studies in his home. I found the Bible studies interesting, and I invited Steph to join me. But she wasn't interested.

Stephanie: I was busy and didn't want to make the time. But when I started attending the Bible studies with Junior a year later, I was stunned with what we read. I asked, "This is in the Bible?" I saw that the Sabbath was mentioned often, and I realized that Saturday was the right day of worship.

One day, I sensed the Holy Spirit saying to me, "It's time," and I decided to give my life to God. Even though I ate pork and shrimp, and loved wine, it wasn't hard for me to let them go. I thought, "I have to be accountable now that I know what is right." I don't think wine is more important than salvation.

Junior: Steph and I also wanted to make sure that our relationship was right with God. We were married in September 2015 and got baptized together one month later.

Interviewer: What happened to your catering business?

Stephanie: We were told that we would not survive because most catering events happen on Friday night and Saturday. The best clients also tend to order exquisite seafood and alcohol. We actually took a big cut in income when we got baptized.

Junior: Right after getting baptized, a

client told us that he wanted a seafood wedding worth 1 million Jamaican dollars, or U.S.\$7,700. He named all the types of seafood that he wanted and said the reception would be held on January 2. I looked at the calendar and saw that January 2 fell on a Saturday. We had to walk away.

One of the first regular contracts that we lost was with an affluent businesswoman. We catered her evening meals several times a week so she wouldn't have to cook for her family of four. But after we were baptized, we told her that we would no longer serve her favorite dishes with lobster and pork.

On our last visit, this woman defrosted a precooked ham and said, "This is not a ham you have to cook. Could you just slice it for me?"

I think it was a test. I left the ham on the counter and opened the Bible on my cellphone to teach her what the Bible says about touching the carcass of an unclean animal. But she didn't want to hear it when she returned to the kitchen. She cut me off and said, "Your choices are impeding my lifestyle."

Stephanie: God worked things out in a funny way. Eighteen months later, this woman asked us to return for a family party on a Friday afternoon. She told us that we would not be asked to compromise our values with food. She also was mindful about the Sabbath. When sunset drew near and we prepared to tell her that we needed to leave, she said, "I know. Your hour has come. You may go."

Surprisingly, she also told us that she had started to go to church on Sundays. We are praying that she will accept the Sabbath.

Interviewer: How do you survive in the catering industry?

Stephanie: For a couple of months, we had to survive on almost nothing. Our income went way below the average wage for a while, but a surprising thing happened. Relatives and friends began to bring us food. They had received packages of food from others and wanted to share. We never asked anyone for food, and we were never hungry. We had so much food that we were able to give some away!

Junior: Our catering company is better off now than before. We didn't have a moral compass before. Now we know the kind of clientele that we are looking for, and our income is more stable. We try to establish long-term relationships and have more office parties and small dinners than large parties.

There is no stress or burden about setting aside the Sabbath. We work Sunday through Thursday and slow down on Friday so we can transition into the Sabbath.

Interviewee: Are you happy with your decision today?

Stephanie: I feel that I have a more holistic life. I feel more whole. I know that God has been working a transformation in me. I often think, "Where would I be at this point if hadn't made that decision to serve God?"

Junior: I would like to encourage Seventh-day Adventists to speak more

openly about their faith. I only recently realized that two of my high school classmates were Adventists. They went home early on Fridays and never said why. I wouldn't have had to wait 10 years to learn about the Sabbath if they had shared their faith. So, I encourage people to speak out more. If we would just share more, more people would know Jesus.

Interviewee: We should never be ashamed of being Seventh-day Adventists and should always be ready to tell others about the reason for our hope in Jesus' soon coming. Let's give a generous Thirteenth Sabbath Offering so more people in the Inter-American Division can learn the good news that Jesus is coming soon!

By Andrew McChesney

[Offering]

Junior Roberts, 28, and Stephanie Roberts, 27



Future Thirteenth Sabbath Projects

NORTH AMERICAN DIVISION

- New Life Center, Holbrook SDA Indian School, Arizona, U.S.A
- Mamawi Atosketan Native School, Alberta, Canada
- Ebeye Mission School, Marshal Islands, U.S.A.

Leader's Resources

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 your local library or a travel agency, or visit the websites listed below.

Belize

government website bit.ly/BelizeGov
Lonely Planet bit.ly/LPBelize

Jamaica

government website bit.ly/JamaicaGov
Wikitravel bit.ly/WikiJamaica

Mexico

government website bit.ly/MexicoGov
Visit Mexico bit.ly/MexicoVisit

Puerto Rico

government website bit.ly/PRGov
Trip Advisor bit.ly/TripAdvisorPR

Trinidad and Tobago

government website news.gov.tt
Fodor bit.ly/FodorTT

Seventh-day Adventist

Inter-American Division interamerica.org
Jamaica Union Conference jmunion.org
Puerto Rican Union Conference upasd.org
Caribbean Union Conference bit.ly/CaribUnionC
Inter-Oceanic Mexican Union Conference asd-umi.org
North Mexican Union Conference adventistasumn.org
Southeast Mexican Union Mission unionsureste.org.mx

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 will 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 Inter-American Division. 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.

YOUTH & ADULT MISSION

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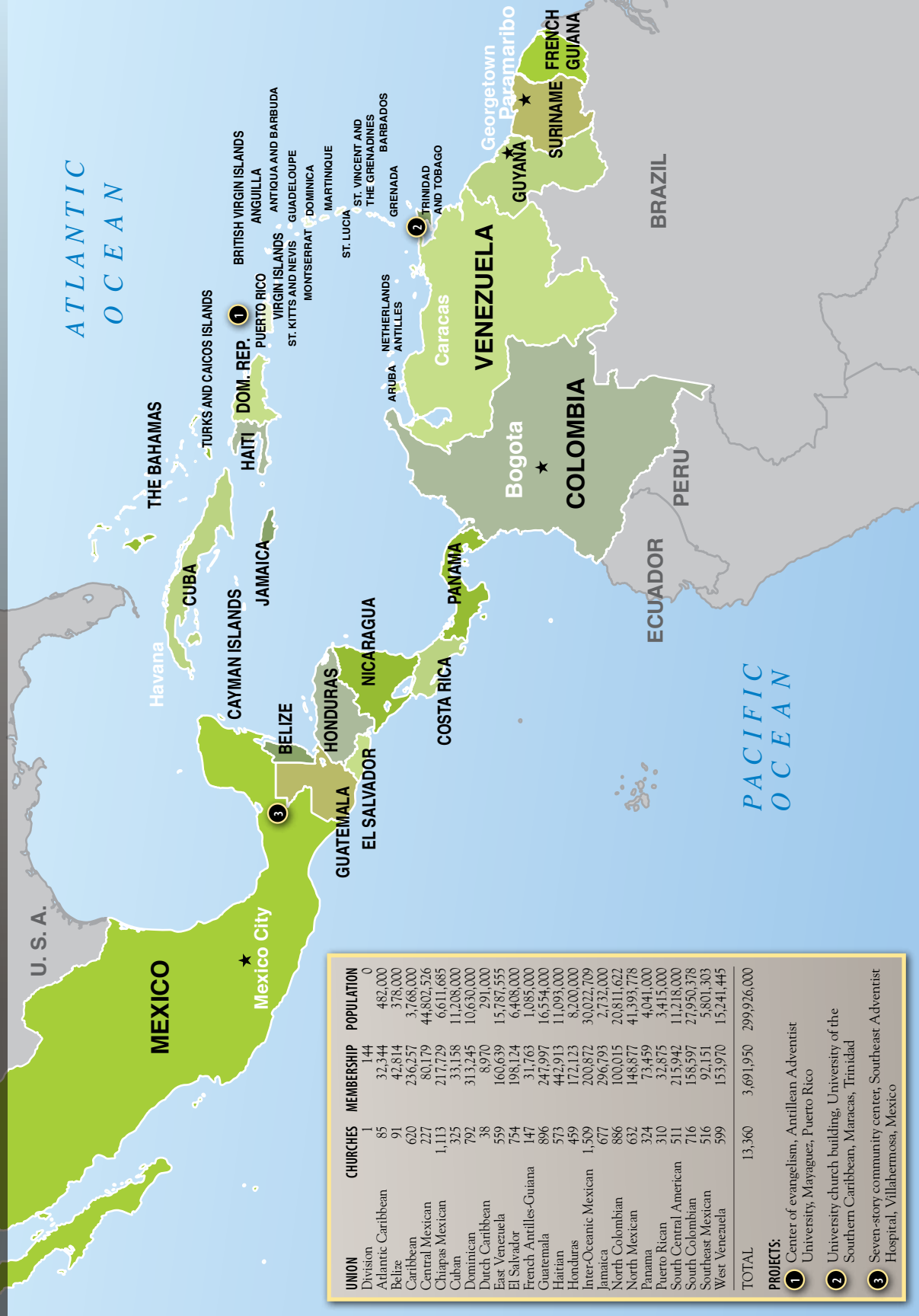
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Inter-American Division



UNION	CHURCHES	MEMBERSHIP	POPULATION
Division	1	144	0
Atlantic Caribbean	85	32,344	482,000
Belize	91	42,814	378,000
Caribbean	620	236,257	3,768,000
Central Mexican	227	80,179	44,802,526
Chiapas Mexican	1,113	217,729	6,611,685
Cuban	325	33,158	11,208,000
Dominican	792	313,245	10,630,000
Dutch Caribbean	38	8,970	291,000
East Venezuela	559	160,639	15,787,555
El Salvador	754	198,124	6,408,000
French Antilles-Guiana	147	31,763	1,085,000
Guatemala	896	247,997	16,554,000
Haitian	573	442,913	11,093,000
Honduras	459	200,872	30,022,709
Inter-Oceanic Mexican	1,509	200,872	30,022,709
Jamaica	677	296,793	2,732,000
North Colombian	886	100,015	20,811,622
North Mexican	632	148,877	41,393,778
Panama	324	73,459	4,041,000
Puerto Rican	310	32,875	3,415,000
South Central American	511	215,942	11,218,000
South Colombian	716	158,597	27,950,378
Southeast Mexican	516	92,151	5,801,303
West Venezuela	599	153,970	15,241,445
TOTAL	13,360	3,691,950	299,926,000

PROJECTS:

- 1** Center of evangelism, Antillean Adventist University, Mayaguez, Puerto Rico
- 2** University church building, University of the Southern Caribbean, Maracaibo, Trinidad
- 3** Seven-story community center, Southeast Adventist Hospital, Villahermosa, Mexico