Out of his comfort zone

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Elisha was born in 1981 and raised in a Christian home on a farm near New Sharon, Iowa. For the past decade, he managed and operated a 1300-acre certified organic farm for a certified public accountant who worked from a nearby town.

"For years, God kept calling to my heart to, like Elisha of old, leave the plow behind and come serve and follow Him," says Elisha. "I loved my job, even though it was very demanding and so stressful much of the time. Instead of me controlling it, it often controlled me. It took me years to recognize this and a few more years to do something about it. I had some really hard decisions to make..."

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SCROLL DOWN to read this issue's announcements and inspiring news stories.

Convention exhibitors

The ASI website now has a List of Exhibitors registered for the convention, with links to exhibitor websites. If you are a registered exhibitor, please verify that your website link is correct. If a link has not been posted, it is because your website address was not provided or
More convention announcements

Schedule-at-a-Glance: A link to the 2011 Schedule-at-a-Glance has been posted on the ASI website.

Rates & Registration: Friday, July 15, was the last day to download and mail paper registration forms. Please use only the online registration link from this point on. The early registration discount is valid through July 30, 2011. Visit the Rates & Registration page of the ASI website to register.

New Member/First Time Attendee Breakfast: A special breakfast meeting will be held on Thursday morning for new members and first-time convention attendees. Invitations will be handed out at registration check-in. This event provides new members and attendees an opportunity to find out what ASI is all about and to meet ASI leaders and officers. A Thursday breakfast ticket is required for admittance. For information, e-mail Steve Dickman at steve@harberthills.org.

Meetings & Events: Please contact Sharon Blumenberg with questions about your special meeting or event reservation or arrangements. E-mail sharon.blumenberg@nad.adventist.org.

Opening Event: The convention will open with a concert featuring Morning Song vocalist Jennifer LaMountain and friends Steve Darmody and Rudy Micelli, accompanied by the ASI-Fountainview choir and orchestra. The concert will begin at 6:30 p.m. on Wednesday, August 3.

Closing Event: The Phoenix Adventist Choir will provide a mini-concert at 7:45 p.m. on Sabbath evening, just prior to the final session presentation. Come early and be blessed!

ASI membership & information

Visit the ASI website for:

- For Membership Information or to download a Membership Application
- To watch Convention Media and other Media programming
- To visit the Bulletin Board for member needs, events and announcements
- To read recent issues of the ASI Update e-newsletter and Inside ASI magazine
- For ASI News & Events or to read about Projects
- To register for the 2011 ASI International Convention in Sacramento, California

Contact the ASI office at 301-680-6450 to order copies of ASI's brochure and promotional DVD to share with friends and potential members. Each promotional DVD includes The ASI Convention Experience video and several episodes of ASI Video Magazine.

SAU archaeological excavation featured on CNN
SAU's archaeological excavation at Khirbet Qeiyafa, near Jerusalem, is in its final week for the 2011 season. The group was featured in a recent CNN report.

GROW Missions takes "willing vessels" to Kenya
GROW Missions sponsored a group of five volunteers, all in less than perfect health, on a mission trip to Kenya where they discovered how God uses our weakness to His glory.
TEACH International sponsors student who gives back

Kanmani was sponsored through nursing school by a couple from Sacramento, California, who learned of her need from TEACH International through ASI membership connections.

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Project Report: Riverside Farm

Using the first half of its ASI special project award, Riverside Farm Institute has installed wheat crop fertigation, purchased an evangelism vehicle, and constructed a new home for two staff workers.

Read more
Out of his comfort zone

Posted on Jul 15, 2011

Elisha Vande Voort is the newest member of the Congo Frontline Missions team. He introduced himself in a recent CFM newsletter, sharing his life experience and revealing how God prepares individuals for service in countries where mission work is particularly difficult.

Elisha was born in 1981 and raised in a Christian home on a farm near New Sharon, Iowa. For the past decade, he managed and operated a 1300-acre certified organic farm for a certified public accountant who worked from a nearby town.

"For years, God kept calling to my heart to, like Elisha of old, leave the plow behind and come serve and follow Him," says Elisha. "I loved my job, even though it was very demanding and so stressful much of the time. Instead of me controlling it, it often controlled me. It took me years to recognize this and a few more years to do something about it. I had some really hard decisions to make, but friends, let me tell you, when you give up something for God and fully surrender every area of your life to Him, He will replace whatever you have given up with something so much better."

That critical decision took Elisha far outside his comfort zone, doing things he'd never done before and going places he'd never gone before, like flying in an airplane and camping out in a tent in the middle of a jungle. "God was with me every step of the way, giving me strength and wisdom, calming my fears, and doing so much more for me. He and I have become really close friends."

Over the past five months, Elisha has helped to build more than a dozen One Day Churches across the central Congo region and an 80-foot radio tower in Kisangani. He has helped to install radio antennas that will broadcast programming to millions in the surrounding areas, and has helped drill wells and fix hand pumps in local villages. In addition to working on bicycles, motorcycles, generators and vehicles, he has also passed out literature, helped with evangelistic efforts, and handed out Bibles to new believers, witnessing dozens of baptisms.

"In our work here, we encounter a lot of very, very poor, heavily laden, suffering people and children." he shared with CFM supporters. "Many of the things we see and the stories we hear in this war-torn country are heart-wrenching to say it mildly.... Congo is not an easy place to live, travel or work in! Many of us have become very sick with serious illnesses. The police and military often give us problems, and there are many people in this country that are heavily into witchcraft and can be very violent at times."

Elisha requested prayer for CFM's church planters, who endure much of the hardship in proclaiming the Gospel throughout the Democratic Republic of Congo. "I have been in many of their villages for a day and have seen and heard some of what they have to endure and believe me, they have it tough!"

He is thankful for the prayers that sustain him and the other CFM workers. "We can often feel that many are uplifting us in prayer each day."

Visit the Congo Frontline Missions website.

Adapted from "From Iowa Farm to Congo Team," by Elisha Vande Voort, Congo Frontline Missions June & July 2011 Newsletter.
As of July 9, Southern Adventist University archaeology professor Michael Hasel, along with 50 staff and students, were in their fifth week of excavation at Khirbet Qeiyafa, the biblical site of Shaarayim, near many other sites referenced in the book of 1 Samuel. The archaeological site overlooks the picturesque Elah valley, about 20 miles east of Jerusalem and near the location of the historic battle between David and Goliath.

The 2011 season will conclude a three-year excavation project partnership between Southern Adventist University, under Prof. Hasel's leadership, and the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, directed by Yosef Garfinkel, a leading archaeologist in modern Israel.

"Khirbet Qeiyafa has recently been catapulted onto the center stage of scholarly debate between the so-called minimalist school which denies the historical existence of the kingdom of David as described in the biblical record, and biblical scholars who uphold the historicity of David and the united monarchy," reports Prof. Hasel.

CNN recently featured footage of the excavation site, primarily showing Southern Adventist University staff and volunteers actively digging in Area D during the 2011 season. Eminent Bible scholars and tour groups from around the world visit the site in recognition of its historical significance. Prof. Garfinkel believes that Khirbet Qeiyafa, like Hebron and Jerusalem, was a key area in the southern region of David's kingdom. Excavation efforts so far have sustained this view, unearthing artifacts that correspond to the 10th century BC, considered to be the time of David.

Excavations are also taking place in Area C, along the eastern gate, by the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, and in Area D, adjacent to the southwestern gate, by 19 staff members and 31 volunteers from Southern Adventist University. Area D discoveries have included pottery sherds, a broken scarab, an Egyptian seal, and a variety of coins from the Hellenistic period, as well as an amulet and a significant number of reconstructable objects from the Iron Age.

"While excavations are still ongoing and architectural features are coming to light on a daily basis, the interpretation of the site and its objects is still tentative," says Prof. Hasel. In addition to Prof. Hasel, also serves as director of the Institute of Archaeology, the university staff participating in the project include Institute of Archaeology associate director Martin Klingbeil and museum coordinator Justo Morales, along with Michael Dant from the School of Computing, and Giselle Hasel from the School of Visual Art and Design. They are cooperating with the Hebrew University of Jerusalem to complete an ambitious publication project relating to the excavation findings.

"This season's excavation has attracted major attention for the important buildings excavated from the time of Alexander the Great and the special finds from the time of David," says Hasel. "Biblical history and prophecy become tangible and real in the 21st century."

The Khirbet Qeiyafa excavation has been an ongoing ASI special offering project.

Visit the Institute of Archaeology website.

View CNN coverage of the Khirbet Qeiyafa excavation.

Adapted from a report by Martin G. Klingbeil, professor of Biblical studies and archaeology at SAU, and associate director for the Institute of Archaeology.
Photo: Volunteer Joliann Penno, senior at Southern Adventist University, holds a thumb-imprinted Hellenistic jar-handle.

Photo by Florian Hasel
GROW Missions takes "willing vessels" to Kenya

Posted on Jul 16, 2011

GROW Missions is an ASI member organization that sponsors short-term mission trips and provides long-term support to individuals in impoverished areas of Africa. The ministry's primary purpose is to meet people's humanitarian needs. GROW is currently undertaking projects in Kenya and Burundi, where volunteers are constructing rain water collection systems, and providing financial support to local widows, orphans, and elders through its Cows for Life program.

GROW recently sponsored a group of five volunteers on a mission trip to Nairobi, Kenya. All five were above the age of 50, and two walked with the assistance of canes. But they were unanimously willing to be used in whatever capacity God called them.

During the trip, GROW leaders demonstrated to the group how they could be used in significant ways, even without prior training or experience. They prepared an evangelistic series to be presented in several prearranged locations. The meetings led to 198 baptisms. GROW provided Bibles to each of the new believers, and the five volunteers were equally touched by the experience.

A few from the group visited five locations where GROW Missions is providing water collection and filtration systems to community schools. This program is improving the health of people in the communities, especially children, by providing clean drinking water.

During the two-week trip, the group also provided five cows to needy widows. The cows will provide income to the widows, who often take in children left orphaned due to the rampant AIDS epidemic.

One of the five volunteers nicknamed the group the "walking wounded" because each had come to Kenya in less than perfect health. Another called themselves the "lame ducks." But, in hindsight, one of the members declared, "I say we were willing vessels who could manifest God through our weakness. This opportunity to show the excellency of the power of God is one we will never forget."
TEACH India sponsors student who gives back

Posted on Jul 15, 2011

TEACH International Ministry places a special emphasis on educating and empowering those in need to become blessings to those around them. A nurse named Kanmani Radha embodies the values of empowerment and giving back.

Kanmani completed nursing school under the sponsorship of a compassionate elderly couple from Sacramento, California, who contributed to her education through TEACH International. Today, she provides health services once each month to several villages in India. In addition, she gives part of her earnings to buy school supplies for impoverished children in the villages. She has not forgotten the help she received when church members helped purchase her own school supplies.

A church member provides Kanmani’s transportation to and from the villages. They recently visited four villages, distributing books to more than 200 children. Additional funds for the books were provided by the couple who sponsored her through nursing school.

When Kanmani began visiting the villages, she was not allowed inside people's houses, but they continued to visit, rain or shine. It made all the difference. In Variachur village, they are now welcome in houses, and they have held a branch Sabbath school and vacation Bible school for three years. The children there are even willing to pray with them. They've also conducted two community health clinics with the aid of a medical doctor and two nurses. Sometime soon, they hope to build a school in the village.

Kanmani and her team are motivated by the verse, "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven" (Matthew 5:16). They're thankful that TEACH International connected with the couple who sponsored Kanmani as a result of ASI membership, which provides many opportunities for collaboration and mutual support among members and ministries.

Reported by Karnnel Charles, executive director for TEACH India.
In December 2010, Riverside Farm Institute received the first half of a $20,000 ASI special projects grant. The funds have been used to fertigate the organization's wheat crop, purchase a new evangelism vehicle, and build a new staff house.

Fertigation tends to be a more accurate way of applying top dressings to crops. It also allows for the replenishment of trace elements in the soil through water application. Riverside was able to complete the fertigation aspect of the project at a lower cost than anticipated.

A new staff house has been erected on an existing slab where a former staff house burned down. It will house two single workers and has an area for a washing machine, freezer, and other appliances. Each separate flat will have its own bathroom, bedroom and kitchenette. It is located in a secluded, beautifully-treed area just 500 feet from the girls' dormitory, and will most likely house Riverside's lifestyle center manager and accountant. Currently, the lifestyle center manager lives in the student dormitory, and the accountant lives in the administration building. As such, they are subject to much noise and many interruptions outside of working hours. They are very thankful for the new housing.