Family Department
Lisbeth Hunger, American Union Family Department Leader, Cedartown, GA

“For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,
Of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named.”
Ephesians 3:14, 15

Families are under attack! Around the world, Satan is tearing husbands and wives apart, leaving children to grow up hurting, angry, and without God. We as Christians are not immune from Satan's threats and must work hard to keep our families together.

To help strengthen families around the world, the delegates to the 2013 World Assembly in South Africa opened a new department—the Family Department. Headed by Sister Raquel Orce, the Family Department is working to help families recognize and meet the needs of their own members.

One of the tools the Family Department has made available for download this year is a family devotional (currently only in Spanish). It, as well as other helpful materials, can be downloaded from their website, www.smifamilia1844.com.

The American Union now has a Family Department, too, headed by Sister Lisbeth Hunger. She has developed a Facebook page (American Union Families) and a full calendar of activities for families in all the fields of the United States. Upcoming events include a family camp at Grayton Beach State Park in Northwest Florida (April 25–27), a Union-Centennial Camp in northern Florida (July 2–6), and much more. Check the AUNL calendar and future newsletters regularly as more information becomes available. If you have questions, suggestions, or need advice, you may contact her at: familyamericanunion@gmail.com.

May God bless you and your family in this coming year.
The Good Samaritan Department was established for the express purpose of ministering to those in need. As church members and others donate funds, the Good Samaritan Department distributes aid to the sick and suffering within the American Union and abroad. The Good Samaritan Corner of the American Union Newsletter will highlight specific needs requiring our special attention and prayers. This month the focus is on orphan care.

James 1:27 says: “Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world.” Ellen White writes: “In placing among them the helpless and the poor, to be dependent upon their care, Christ tests His professed followers. By our love and service for His needy children we prove the genuineness of our love for Him. To neglect them is to declare ourselves false disciples, strangers to Christ and His love.” – The Ministry of Healing, p. 205.

God doesn’t require the same service from everyone, but He does ask everyone to do something to help those who are neglected. He asks some to pray, others to donate funds, and still others to provide counsel, friendship, and guidance to young people without parents. God also asks some to open their hearts to invite a child in as their adopted son or daughter. “Until death shall be swallowed up in victory, there will be orphans to be cared for, who will suffer in more ways than one if the tender compassion and loving-kindness of our church members are not exercised in their behalf. The Lord bids us, ‘Bring the poor that are cast out to thy house,’ Chris-tianity must supply fathers and mothers for these homeless ones. The compassion for the widow and the orphan manifested in prayers and deeds, will come up in remembrance before God, to be rewarded by and by.” Ibid.

I have asked two people to share their experiences with readers of the AUNL.

Bobby Bell: Last summer I was blessed with the opportunity to host Adrians, a nine-year-old orphan boy from Eastern Europe. To say that it was “life changing” does not begin to express the depth of the impact this precious boy has had on me and how God has used him to draw me into a deeper relationship with my heavenly Father. My motives were initially to make a positive difference in his life. Who could have known that in five very short weeks this little boy would go from being a total stranger to being the son born of my heart.

None of the hosting programs I knew of allowed single parents to host. Although I understood their reasoning, it frustrated me. It always saddened me when I saw children who would not be hosted because no one stepped up to take them. I would always comment that I was willing yet not permitted to host. Then a woman from New Horizons felt impressed by God to help me. She reached out to Sister Margie Seely for my contact information and told me about Project 143, a program that does allow single parents to host. I was so happy!

Within 48 hours I had begun the process, yet I had only three weeks to finalize everything that most families have over three months to complete. The clock was ticking! Before I even looked at the pictures of the children who were still available to host, I asked the Lord to lead me to the boy whom I would be able to impact the most for Jesus. Then I saw Adrians’ picture—the sad little boy with the red shirt. His expression said, “Why bother? No
one will pick me.” As I read his profile, I knew this was the one God had chosen. When asked what he wanted in a family, unlike other children who said they wanted a mom and a dad, Adrians simply said he wanted “a loving dad.”

God worked one miracle after another to facilitate everything in such a way that it was undeniably His hand at work. From being able to get my State clearance in my hand the day I applied (it normally takes at least fifteen business days), to raising all the funds needed and completing all the paperwork, medical reports, and so on, everything was done in ten days!

I was fortunate to be between jobs when Adrians came in the summer, which meant I was able to devote the entire time to him. We went to the pool almost daily, and I taught him to swim. He had never been in the water before that, and was petrified. Nevertheless, by the time his visit was over, he was swimming like a little fish. We went lizard and frog catching and even camped out in the back yard a couple of nights. We truly bonded during this time. It was wonderful!

Until he came this summer, Adrians never knew what it was like to get piggyback rides from a father, have someone read bedtime Bible stories to him, ride his own bicycle, have a pet fish, or to just feel loved and know that HE MATTERS! So much that we take for granted was for this little guy new and amazing. Most of all, however, he just loved to be hugged, tickled, and cuddled. He was like a little sponge soaking it all in.

What I found so amazing about Adrians was what a generous heart he has. No matter what he has, especially food, he always insists on sharing, even if it means he is left with nothing. Such generosity is especially amazing, for in his short life he has often experienced hunger, loss, and suffering to a degree that no one should have to endure. He is one of the most endearing people I have ever met in my life.

Through the loving generosity of others, I was able to host Adrians again over the winter holidays. He was so happy to be back. Our reunion at the airport was the front-page story of the hosting newsletter.

Because of his age (9) and special challenges, there is no hope that he will be adopted in his home country. Without an adoptive family he faces life in an orphanage until age 16, when he will be “released” to fend for himself. No home, no family, no place to go. Alone, destined to become another tragic statistic on the streets of Eastern Europe. But now, with God’s help, I will not let that happen!

I've often wanted to become a missionary in a foreign land. Now it seems that God has brought the mission field home to me. From the very beginning, the Lord's blessing has been evident as seemingly insurmountable obstacles have been removed, leaving a clear path toward the ultimate goal of bringing this precious boy home forever.

The Bible and the spirit of Prophecy are very clear about our responsibility to the “fatherless.” May the Lord bless you as you prayerfully consider how you can best honor Him and reflect His love to these forgotten children who are so dear to His heart.

Bobby's website: hisbridgehome.wordpress.com

Margie Seely: On a cold February morning in 1950, two young girls peered pensively through the car window as they pulled up to a large ranch in Lodi, California. Newly court-ordered foster children, they had been taken from their parents and were being transferred to the appointed foster home. When they stepped out of the car, a kind woman greeted them cheerily. In time, they would call her “Mama,” and she would teach them about Jesus.

As I grew up, this story became more to me than just a narrative of my mother’s life; it became my heart's mission. To reach out to lonely and hurting children and provide them food, clothing, shelter, and the opportunity to know Jesus was what I knew God was calling me to do.

Today, approximately 150 million children around the world languish in foster care, group homes, and orphanages. Some don't even make it there. Countless children scrape out a living in
garbage dumps and on the cold, hard streets. They grow up to live a life of crime, stealing from society or selling their bodies, empty and broken, to heartless strangers. These children's stories are as varied as the countries they come from and the languages they speak, but one common thread ties them all together—that desperate longing for someone, anyone, to love them.

In December 2013, we hosted a 17-year-old girl from Ukraine. We were privileged to provide her much-needed dental work, new clothes and school supplies, and a new pair of glasses. It was a joy to see her excited expression when she put on her glasses and was finally able to see clearly!

While with us, she experienced many new things and asked many questions. Why are we vegetarian? Why don't we drink alcohol? Why do we worship on Saturday instead of Sunday? Why do we care about her? We answered her questions and encouraged her to read her Bible on a daily basis. She protested that she was too busy with school. I shared with her the story of Daniel and left it at that.

On January 16, 2014, she returned to her orphanage in Ukraine. Since then she has messaged me almost daily, sharing her joys, disappointments, hopes, and fears. Then, suddenly, things became really intense. Ukrainian citizens took to the streets by the thousands to demand the resignation of their president. Violence broke out, and rumors of a civil war echoed throughout the country. The nation trembled. “I am afraid!” she wrote me. I texted verses of comfort and encouragement to her. I promised her that, no matter what happened, she would never be alone. She believed me. On her own, she picked up her Bible and began to read the precious words of One who has promised to never leave us nor forsake us. Now, she has completed the book of Job and is reading the book of Psalms. We pray that she will continue learning about her heavenly Father and trusting His unending love for her.

Sixty-four years ago, a kind woman opened her home to my mother and taught her the love of Jesus. My mom accepted Jesus as her Saviour and raised me to love Him too. Today, my husband and I are honored also to share God's love with "the least of these"–the orphans of the world.

Is God calling you to host, foster, or adopt a child? If you would like more information, please visit the websites listed below. Do you wish to donate to orphan ministry? You may send a donation marked “orphan care” to the Good Samaritan Department or donate directly to the families who have written here. Your involvement can change a life forever.

To host children from Ukraine, Latvia, Philippines, or China, visit: newhorizonsforchildren.org or projectonefortythree.org

### 2014 Calendar

- **April 25-27**: Family Camp at Grayton Beach State Park, FL
- **July 2-6**: Family Camp, Florida
- **August 11-13**: Western Field Delegates’ Meetings, Mountain Center, CA
- **August 11-17**: Reformation Tour, Germany
- **August 13-17**: Western Field Conference, Mountain Center, CA