**Adventist Heritage**

**From:** Prayers Among Buddhists <prayersamongbuddhists@gmail.com>

**Sent:** Monday, July 11, 2011 6:05 AM

**To:** Adventist Heritage

**Subject:** [Spam:***** SpamScore] Pray for Buddhist teachers and children...and us, please!

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Prayers Among Buddhists eNewsletter

11 July 2011

**Our first class**

**New venture in witnessing**
July 6 we began an English class for children in grades 4-6 in their afterschool program. Forty students signed up. There was good interaction, the children were focused and it really was a fun time with them. The officers of the Thetsabaan (or administrative office) of Nakhon Luang district (where the Buddhist Study Center is located) asked us to assist them with this class. They wanted native English speakers to help them prepare the students for interacting with foreigners. The reason for this is the possibility of the World Expo coming to Ayutthaya in 2020 if Thailand wins the bidding. We will be teaching every Wednesday afternoon now through September.

This is a wonderful opportunity to influence these Buddhist children, making friends with them and their teachers. We are praying for discernment: that we will not miss one teachable moment in which we might share Jesus. Would you join us in prayer for this project?

"He that followeth Me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life."  
John 8:12
"The word of God is the food by which prayer is nourished and made strong."
E. M. Bounds
Window Into China

One in five of the world’s population now lives in China. Here, 1.3 billion people live in what is geographically the third largest country on the planet.

China is proud of its 5,000-year civilization. From ancient times China contributed to humankind with the invention of the compass, gunpowder, paper-making, and block printing. In the last decade China’s annual economic growth has averaged a staggering 10 percent. No wonder China is assuming a prominent place on the world stage.

Religiously Speaking
China is not now and never has been a deeply religious country. Confucianism, Taoism, and Buddhism are China’s traditional religions, but Christianity also has a long history in the country. The first authentic record—from the excavated Nestorian Tablet—tells that the first Christian missionaries came to China in the seventh century during the Tang Dynasty. Even with the emperor’s support, however, this early Christian movement, like a shooting star, survived only a short time.

Modern Protestantism came to China exactly 200 years ago, when Robert Morrison of the London Missionary Society arrived in 1807. The Adventist message came to China in 1888 with Abram LaRue, a 66-year-old lay member. In 1902, our church sent its first official missionary to southern China, Jacob N. Anderson. By 1951 the Seventh-day Adventist Church had 21,000 members among 276 churches, while fewer than 1 million Protestants lived among a population of 450 million.

Over the next 25 years, particularly during the so-called Great Cultural Revolution (1966-1976), religions of all kinds were diminished; not a single public place of worship survived.

Now the church is like bamboo shoots after the spring rain. A 5,000-seat cathedral-style Christian church is located in the beautiful city of Hangzhou; while the largest Adventist church, seating 4,000 (above), stands in the northeastern city of Shenyang. Such spectacular events are happening for the first time in Chinese history.

The most wonderful thing is that the Bible is available among the Chinese as never before. During the Cultural Revolution, Bibles were confiscated and burned. Now 50 million copies of the Bible have been produced by the Amity Printing Company, sponsored by the United Bible Society.

There are now an estimated 50 million Christians in China. The Adventist Church has more than 15 times the membership it had 50 years ago—around 350,000. This has been accomplished without formal educational and medical institutions to help God’s cause. The Holy Spirit is moving upon thirsty hearts, and gospel seeds are being spread by His faithful children. The message is also being spread through modern media.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CAPITAL</th>
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<tr>
<td>LANGUAGE</td>
<td>Mandarin, Cantonese, Shanghaiese, Fuzhou</td>
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<tr>
<td>RELIGION</td>
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<td>ADVENTIST TO POPULATION RATIO</td>
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Please remember China in your prayers, the largest area in the 10/40 window and the greatest mission field in the world.

Compiled by Robert Wong, Ministerial Association secretary for the Chinese Union Mission in Hong Kong.
Mission Stories
From the Southern Asia-Pacific Division

Many of the following stories were originally published in the first quarter 2009
Adventist Mission for Youth and Adults.

Accidental Evangelism
Central Philippines
How far will God go to answer an earnest seeker’s prayer?

Another Power
Philippines

Bathing Suits for Christmas
Indonesia

Crabs and Convictions
Southern Philippines
A conversation in the marketplace turned into a Bible study, and soon Geronimo and his family discovered truths they had never known.

Doors Swing Open in Vietnam
Vietnam

Finding Unity in Faith
Southern Philippines
He urged his family to find a faith—any faith—that they all would follow. His children surprised him and led the way.

Former Prisoner Saves Missionary Evangelist
Indonesia

God Intervenes in West Irian
Indonesia

I am Satisfied
Myanmar

Lessons I’ve Learned
Northern Philippines
"I was really nervous about the debate, but our teacher reminded us to ask God to be with us and help us to honor Him, no matter what happened."

Loving the Truth
Philippines

Mark’s Second Chance
Northern Philippines
He wondered whether he would ever be able to improve his life and yearned for a chance to finish school.

A New Life for Rosville
Central Philippines
A teen girl searches for a better life and discovers the answer her family needs.

Out of Slavery
Northern Philippines
Enslaved by his own brother at age 10, he fought for freedom and found it in Christ.

The Path of Life
Northern Philippines
"I felt alone, but God hadn’t left me; I’d left Him. He still had plans for me."

The Persecutor Repents
Central Philippines
"I knew that this was not just a dream; this was a message from God."

The Priest Who Helped the Adventist
Central Philippines
Ernesto wanted answers, but his priest had none. God had the answers and a way to help Ernesto find them.

Standing Up for Jesus
Northern Philippines
They threatened her, tied her up, and struck her; but she still refused to give up her faith.

This Is Not Christmas
Indonesia
The Unexpected Job
Central Philippines
A young student from the Philippines struggles to decide what career path to follow after graduation.

Chona paced around the room, angry and frustrated. This is our vacation! She thought. And my own brother treats me like a prisoner!

Chona, a native of the Philippines, had lived in Switzerland, where she met and married her husband. Recently they returned to Chona’s homeland and decided to build a home there. While they were building it, they spent time visiting relatives. Her brother, Protestant pastor, invited her to attend his church, but Chona refused. When he asked why, she told him that Sunday was not the Sabbath.

Chona’s Discovery
Chona didn’t know much about the Sabbath, but she knew it wasn’t Sunday. She had seen an Adventist television program while still in Switzerland and had read some Adventist literature. She was intrigued. Then an Adventist nurse invited Chona to visit her church. Chona attended. She sensed that this church taught the truth, but she had been unable to complete Bible studies before she and her husband left for the Philippines. She hadn’t found an Adventist church in the Philippines, but she kept looking.

When Chona repeatedly refused to attend her brother’s church, her brother became increasingly angry. Then one Sunday he locked Chona and her husband into their room while he went to church. Chona prayed. “Dear God, surely You have people here in the Philippines. Help me to find them!”

Chona’s brother finally allowed Chona and her husband to leave his house. The couple left for their own home an hour away. Chona continued to pray, “Lord, help me find a church—Your church. Help me to know the truth.” She had no idea how soon God would answer her prayer.

The Accident
Toto rode his motorbike toward home after having delivered some goods. Suddenly he felt a slight bump and found himself sailing through the air. He landed hard and slid on his side, coming to a stop in the middle of the road. His motorbike lay nearby.

Before he could figure out what had happened, a man and woman stood over him. “Are you OK?” they asked.

“IT think so,” Toto said as he struggled to his feet. He saw his damaged motorbike and realized that the car in which these two had been riding had hit him. “Let’s go to the police station and file a report,” Toto said, fearful that these people would escape.

“Don’t worry,” Chona said. “I’m a Christian. I won’t try to escape my responsibility. I’ll pay for any damage to your bike, any medical bills you have, and to replace your merchandise.

“What church do you attend?” Toto asked.

“I am an Adventist,” Chona said.

“I’m an Adventist too,” Toto said.

God’s Swift Answer
Chona was startled. She reached out to hug Toto, but remembered he might be injured. “Oh, sir, you are an answer to my prayer! I’ve been praying to find an Adventist, and God has just answered my prayer!”

Chona asked her nephew to take Toto to the hospital. There the doctors checked him and confirmed that he was not seriously injured, but it would take time for his scrapes and bruises to heal. Chona paid to have Toto’s motorbike repaired and offered to support him for a month while he recovered from his injuries.
injuries. Then she asked to have Bible studies.

Finding Her Faith
Toto asked his pastor to visit Chona. When he arrived, Chona eagerly told him that she had been praying to meet an Adventist and find a church so she could prepare for baptism. The pastor was pleased to study with her.

Chona was an eager student of the Bible. Her husband joined her in studying the Bible. He committed his life to God, but his health was failing, and he was too ill to be baptized when Chona took her stand a month later. A month later Chona’s husband died, holding firmly onto the faith that his wife introduced him to.

Chona and Toto smile as they talk about how God introduced them, literally by an accident. “God knew that I was impatient to find the Adventists,” Chona said. “So he arranged for me to meet Toto as soon as possible.”

God sends people into our lives who are searching for the truth. We must prayerfully be ready whenever He calls upon us to give an answer for the faith we hold dear (1 Peter 3:15). This is one way we can obey the Great Commission to go into the world and preach the gospel.

Fast Facts
Dumaguete, where this story took place, is a city on the island of Negros in the heart of the Philippines. Like most large cities in the Philippines, it is located on the ocean. Fishing and agriculture are the main sources of the country’s income.

Another Power

Tay Juan walked through the village with his spear in one hand and his charms in the other. These were the signs of his power. He claimed to heal the sick or appease the spirits with slain chickens or a slaughtered pig. When tribal conflicts arose, Tay Juan restored peace.

As Sulads, student missionaries from Mountain View College, we had been warned about the powers of darkness we would face in the village. We knew that victory came only through a constant and close connection with Jesus. My partner and I prayed for God’s strength and the Holy Spirit to boldly face Tay Juan and the powers of darkness.

When I finally met Tay Juan, his dignified bearing reminded me of Elisha, but the smell of alcohol and the smoke from his cigarette told me otherwise. “I am so happy that you have come to teach my people,” he said. “You have risked your lives to come here. You sacrifice your own needs for the sake of others. I, too, will learn from you.”

I felt so humble realizing that God had gone before us and had tamed the devil.

Tay Juan calls my partner and me his children. When we warned him of the dangers of tobacco and palm wine, he listened. “Thank you for telling me this,” he said. “I didn’t know that these things could destroy my body.”

One evening he came to hear the children sing during our worship service. He loved the beautiful songs and asked for more. Tay Juan began attending worship every day. He listened to the songs and messages from God’s Word.

And when two pastors came to baptize some believers in our village, we were surprised to see Tay Juan join the line! Tay Juan gave his heart to Christ. One day he came to our cottage carrying a knife and a sword. “These weapons were my power, my protection from accidents and enemies,” he began. “But I have a stronger power now and don’t need these any longer.” We prayed that God’s protection would go with Tay Juan.

Tay Juan continues to heal the sick, not with incantations or sacrificial chickens, but with prayers to the Great Physician, Jesus.

Joesie Durango served as a teacher in the Tubakon Literacy Center in the mountains of Mindanao, southern Philippines.

Bathing Suits for Christmas

Nancy Lyon Kyte

We arrived at Bandung, Java in Indonesia just before Thanksgiving in 1963. The vastly different culture must have been a shock for my parents, but for the four girls in our family, everything was new and exciting. We loved the Dutch house we lived in, the one-room school that doubled as the teacher’s garage, and the new friends we made.
But what were we going to do about Christmas? It was going to be weird, we knew that for sure.

We were used to Norman Rockwell-type family gatherings at Grandpa and Grandma’s farm in Iowa. Cold wind would blast outside, laughter and noise would fill the inside, and there was always a huge Christmas dinner.

In Indonesia the weather was hot, we hadn’t seen a single pine tree anywhere, and the food was completely different. Our shipment of personal things hadn’t yet arrived from America. And then we girls had a horrifying thought—what if we didn’t even have Christmas that year!

A few days before the holiday, someone dropped off a thin, scraggly tree that would become our Christmas tree. We propped it against the wall, thrilled that we would have something for Christmas. We made garlands and ornaments out of whatever we could find.

To our surprise and delight, we got new bathing suits for Christmas. Bathing suits! Who could imagine such a thing for Christmas! We could hardly wait to write to Grandpa and Grandma and tell them the fantastic news—we went swimming on Christmas day!

Nancy Kyte is the director of marketing for the Office of Adventist Mission at the Seventh-day Adventist Church world headquarters. Below is a current photo of Nancy with her sisters taken at Columbia Gorge, Oregon, in the United States.

We live on an island in the southernmost Philippines, and everyone here eats lots of seafood. Crabs are among the most popular foods, and my mother loved them. You might say that her love for crabs helped her find the Adventist Church.

Man in the Marketplace
One day while she was at the market buying crabs for dinner, she met a man who started chatting with her. The young man mentioned how what we eat determines how healthy we are. Mother looked and saw the man’s bags contained mostly vegetables and fruits, and he had no crabs or other seafood in his bags. She asked him what his favorite foods were.

Jun, the young man, said that he enjoys mostly fruits and vegetables. “But what about fish or other seafood?” Mother persisted. “What is your favorite?” The young man said he ate no seafood or meat. “But everyone on the island eats seafood,” she said, surprised. Jun gently explained that God has said that shellfish and pork, among other foods, are unclean.

My mother was intrigued. “Does the Bible really talk about crabs?” she asked. Jun offered to visit her home and tell her more. Mother was curious and invited Jun to come and visit.

It turned out that Jun was a missionary from Mountain View College, an Adventist school in southern Philippines. He carefully explained that God has called some foods fit to eat and others not fit to eat. “And if we want the best for our bodies, we should follow God’s instructions,” Jun said. Mother nodded. That made sense.

Mother invited Jun to come back and study the Bible with our family every week. And once I met Jun, I was eager to know about him and his church as well. I had never heard of Seventh-day Adventists before.

Discovering More Truth
I was in high school at the time, and I had long been curious about religion. My sister and I had lived with a Protestant pastor’s family while my mother traveled to another island to find work. Later when she came
to get us, we lived in a room in the house of a religious teacher. He wasn’t Christian, but that didn’t matter to me. I enjoyed listening and learning from him. In time I wished I could join his religion, but I knew that my mother would refuse to let me. She was a strong believer in our Christian church, and we went to church every Sunday.

But when Jun started visiting us, he talked about things I had never heard from any other church or religion. I could see that Jun really knew his Bible, for he read many Bible texts on the topics we discussed.

Jun continued visiting, and soon he invited us to visit his church. It was quite different from the church we attended on Sunday, but the people welcomed us with kindness and friendship. We began looking forward to worshipping there every week.

Two years later my mother, my sister, and I were baptized along with several people from the families we had studied with. It was exciting to see how God was using us to lead others to Jesus!

**Tested and Tried**

Soon after we were baptized, my mother was fired from her teaching job at the religious kindergarten because she no longer was a member of our former church. She found another teaching position in a private kindergarten. I had finished high school and was just starting my nursing program at that time.

Then one day Mother had a stroke and lost her eyesight. I tried to convince her to give up teaching, for I couldn’t see how she could teach if she was blind. But she persisted, and when she was strong enough she found work at an Adventist kindergarten. In spite of her blindness, she teaches there today.

I am amazed at how God led Jun to my mother in the crab market in order to lead us to greater truth than we had ever known. Now God is leading us to people who need to know His wonderful truths. Wherever we go, we ask God to show us opportunities to talk about Him to those who are searching. That’s the spirit of mission.

**Fast Facts**

Zamboanga is a large city on the southwestern tip of the island of Mindanao in the Philippines. The majority of the Philippines' Muslims live in Mindanao, the large island on which Zamboanga is located, and on the islands in the Sulu Sea to the south. While most of the people are friendly and peaceful, sometimes tension and fighting breaks out between some Muslims and the government, especially on the smaller islands.

I was a tribal chieftain living in the mountains of Mindanao in southern Philippines. Then I married a woman, and I moved to the island where she was from. My three children, teenagers from a previous marriage, came to live with us. The island, off the coast of Zamboanga, is so different from the mountains where I’d lived most of my life.

We had barely started our new life together when we faced a problem. We were of different faiths and attended different churches. I tried to get my wife and children to attend my church, but my wife felt uncomfortable there and the children paid no attention to the services. Seeing this, I urged my children to go to my wife’s church with her while I stayed home to tend my garden and sell the vegetables. But this plan didn’t work either.

We talked about it and agreed that we must worship as a family. But we couldn’t agree on which church to go to. Finally we decided to find a new church, one our family could agree on.

**The Search for Faith**

Giving up our own churches was hard, but how would we ever find a church we all could agree on? There were so many different churches to choose from. We started asking our friends for suggestions, and my wife even asked a fellow teacher to send someone from his church to study the Bible with our family. But no one came to study with us.

Then one day, my wife, who is a friendly person, met three people who were walking across the school yard where she teaches. She learned that they were Seventh-day Adventists, and that they believed in following the Bible in all aspects of life. This interested her, and she invited them to come and talk to us about what Adventists believe. The Adventists made an appointment to come the following Sunday to visit us.

**Doing the Research**

From the start the Adventists’ visits were a revelation to me. I realized the Bible had a lot of things I didn’t know about. We invited the people to come back, and soon Sunday morning became our own personal Bible study time.

I told my children they had to take part in the Bible studies, too. They agreed, though somewhat
grudgingly. But my oldest daughter quickly became genuinely interested. Then my son learned that one of his school friends was an Adventist, and he too became interested.

After three weeks of studies, the people from the other church that my wife had invited finally showed up. So for more than a year we studied with the Adventists in the morning and the other church in the afternoon. As we saw differences in what the two churches taught, we realized that the Adventists based their beliefs on the Bible and the others based much on tradition.

The Children Decide
The first one to be convinced that the Adventist Church teaches the truth was my 15-year-old son. He was baptized with his friend. A few months later, my oldest daughter was baptized, and finally my youngest son.

Still my wife and I hesitated. Both of us had family members who were pastors in other churches. We felt pressure from our families to remain in our families’ churches. As I struggled with my decision, I reviewed the Bible studies and realized that all of the Adventist teachings were grounded in the Bible. Finally I surrendered to God and was baptized.

I entered into church fellowship and worship every Sabbath with my family. My wife attended church whenever she was free, but she still struggled with her family over her decision to join the Adventist Church. We studied and prayed together every morning, and every evening we worshipped together as a family.

Finally my wife also decided to be baptized an Adventist. Since she made the decision to be baptized, she has been a strong and firm Adventist. At last we are a happy family, united in our faith. We couldn’t foresee where God would lead us, but we are convinced that it was God who led all the way. And the best part of it is that our children led the way.

We are a family united in worship, and we have gained a whole new family of brothers and sisters in faith.

Fast Facts
Zamboanga is a major city on the tip of southwestern Mindanao, one of the largest islands in the Philippines. Known as the melting pot of southern Philippines, Zamboanga has been shaped by Asian, European, Islamic, Christian, and Buddhist traditions and is home to a diverse blend of people.

Former Prisoner Saves Missionary Evangelist

by Theodore (Ted) T. Jones, II,
first African-American to serve in the former Far Eastern Division

The 1960s were turbulent times for the nation of Indonesia. This was the land of many islands, rich in culture and history, full of people and volcanoes, and described by one photographer as “a place where every look is a view worth shooting.”

Our family of six arrived in Indonesia in 1968 as the first African-American family called to serve in what was then the great Far Eastern Division. The moment we stepped of the plane was an instant love experience. Toward the end of that year we learned that an invitation had come to the Union office in Djakarta for me to travel to Central Java to the city of Surabaja to conduct my first evangelistic meeting in that area.

Since I had not had much time to study the Indonesian language, it was absolutely necessary to have a translator for the campaign. What a great blessing it was to have the mission president, Pastor J B Th Umboh to be my nightly translator. This personable man was not only a great preacher but also was blessed to speak many languages, including English, fluently. He and his wife opened their hearts and their home to me during the entire six-week campaign. Great food, fellowship, and laughter were our daily fare.

The mission rented a large auditorium which seated more than 1,000 people and we were happy to see it filled every nigh. Our team of pastors provided us with good music, including a fine quartet. All the Adventist churches of the city gave us strong support every night. We had a special group of church elders who sat in a special spot in the auditorium every night and prayed during the services.

It was during the middle of the campaign that my eyes were opened as to the importance of this prayer group. On a Sunday night, as Pastor Umboh and I were preaching in front of our microphones, his mike suddenly dropped about one and one-half feet. He loosened the collar on the shaft, pulled the mike back to its normal position and continued to translate as I continued to preach. Suddenly, his mike went down again and he had to adjust it again. Then it happened twice more. We asked Pastor Willie Rumambi, a very strong, muscular man to come up and really tighten things down. He did it and walked back to his seat with a smile only to hear the mike go down again. Pastor Umboh whispered to me, “Satan is here! He is very angry about our message tonight.”

I looked to the left side of the auditorium and gave an emphatic nod and gesture to the chairman of the special prayer band, Pastor A T Siong so that the group would immediately begin to pray. We were in a
crisis and needed Divine help as quickly as possible. Those men began to pray and suddenly the sulfur-like smell that was hovering over the platform lifted and a presence ruffled the stage curtains as it departed. We were able to end the meeting that night with a strong appeal to those who were willing to accept Christ as their Savior and Champion in the issues of life.

Then, shortly after that eventful night, we were awakened on a Sunday morning to the sound of sirens and voices and the sight of columns of black smoke rising in the air. A riot was in progress in Surabaja. Chinese-owned stores and homes were the objects of political rage. It was a frightful time. People were listening to their radios. Appeals were made for calmness to prevail but the trouble spread. All public meetings were canceled. Martial law was announced, curfews were set and people were ordered to stay at home. It was indeed a time of trouble!

About 10 of us ministers stood on the sidewalk between the mission office and the president’s home talking, wondering what would happen next. When the sun set, the darkness seemed more dense than ever before. Suddenly, we heard the sound of a big truck approaching the mission office which was located in a cul-de-sac. When it stopped, blocking the entrance of our street, we knew that things were no longer OK! Soldiers with rifles and machine guns came running toward us and many of my friends simply melted away. We were in a crisis and needed help.

The leader of this military group walked up to me and demanded “Where is your leader?” All I could think of was a simple answer, “I guess I’m it.” “What is your name sir?” he asked. I responded, “Pastor Ted Jones.” “You are not Indonesian, what is your country?” he asked. “I am an American citizen, sir,” I responded. “I am here conducting meetings for the Seventh-day Adventist Church.” Suddenly, this officer, a lieutenant in the Indonesian army embraced me with a burst of energy, a big smile, and said, “Good, I am your brother!” By now I was thoroughly confused.

This man, Lieutenant Thomas, told us that military intelligence had discovered a plot by a group of militants to attack all Christian churches that night, kill the people, and burn the properties. He got permission from his commanding officer to protect the Adventist Church and its headquarters. He asked me where I was staying and I showed the front bedroom of the Umboh’s house. Lieutenant Thomas ordered a machine gunner to sit beneath my window with his machine gun mounted on a tripod. Then he placed other troops in different positions there in the cul-de-sac. He instructed his troops, “If those people come in here to attack, fire warning shots into the air. If they ignore the warnings, shoot them down. We must protect our Christian people here.”

I have read many times the Bible promise of Psalm 34:7, NIV, “The angel of the Lord encamps around those who fear Him and He delivers them.” That night, as I slept fitfully, yet safely, I thanked my God for that group of members and their pastor who went faithfully to that prison and introduced Lieutenant Thomas to Jesus Christ. In addition, 157 precious souls dedicated themselves in baptism to the service of the Lord. Our God is still able to deliver those who serve Him.

Theodore (Ted) T. Jones, II, was the first African-American to serve in the former Far Eastern Division, now Southern Asia-Pacific Division, as union evangelist and ministerial director. He and his wife, Esther, and their four children, Ted, III, Randal, Jeffrey, and Janelle, also served in Uganda during the days of Idi Amin.

Jones also served as president of the Atlantic Union Conference and as an associate secretary of the General Conference before retiring in 2005. He and Esther now reside in Topeka, Kansas, where he pastors a small congregation and does volunteer chaplain work in a juvenile maximum security prison.

God Intervenes in West Irian

by Theodore (Ted) T. Jones, II, first African-American to serve in the former Far Eastern Division

What an exciting time it was to be flying from Jakarta, Indonesia, location of the West Indonesia Union Mission headquarters, to Jayapura, the capital of West Irian. This trip was in response to a request from the West Irian Mission for a city-wide evangelistic campaign. The mission president (pictured on right in photo below) was J. S. Maramis, a talented and personable leader.

I stayed in the spare bedroom of the large mission
house. It was a two-story structure and had an apartment in the basement. In one week after my arrival we were to start this evangelistic series. We assumed that everything was all right and that we could go full steam ahead. Our church leaders had made arrangements for a six-week lease on the Sarinah auditorium, which was the largest facility available.

On the day we were scheduled to go to inspect the building and make our plans for seating, the platform arrangement, the sound system, etc., a messenger from the government office knocked on the door of the mission office and informed us that our reservation for the building had been canceled. They said that the building was not fit for such a meeting as ours and especially since a foreigner was to be the speaker. Their suggestion was that we should “come back next year.”

With such a hard blow to the hopes of our mission staff, someone said, “Pastor Jones, you cannot waste your time here so you might as well go on back to Djakarta. Maybe the Union can find another place where you can conduct an evangelistic meeting.” Somehow I felt that God had permitted this disappointment in order to open another window of opportunity.

The next day, several of us ministers got into the only running mission vehicle, an old Volkswagen bus, and headed north on the asphalt road to find another location. We had no idea what was in store for us. As we rode along the big hole in the floor of the middle seat area provided us with moments of laughter. Someone suggested that in case of brake failure, it would be the responsibility of the passenger on the middle seat to put his legs through that hole to stop the vehicle using his shoe soles as brakes. Fortunately, we never had to resort to that tactic.

We hadtraveled more than thirty minutes when we came to the village of Abeepura. We passed several clusters of houses and three nice church buildings. Then, over on the right side of the road, just north of the Catholic church, we saw a structure standing in a large field. I said to the mission president, “Let’s find out who owns that chicken house. It looks empty so it should not cost very much to use.” An answer came almost immediately. “Well, I can find out for you. We have a church building here.”

After we met the pastor of the church, Jantje Sopacua, he was excited and we were impressed that God wanted us to use that humble building with the tin roof, siding about four feet high, crooked posts and crossbeams, as our meeting place. In just a few days, a group of young men had cleaned up the grounds, made many benches, a platform, painted the sides of the building, and secured kerosene lanterns for our lights. I painted a 4 x 8 foot sign for the building which advertised our upcoming meetings and we were ready for business.

Then trouble began. A series of petitions were circulated throughout the area protesting the meetings which supposedly would confuse the minds of the people and cause trouble. These petitions were carried to the office of the police chief of that area who promised the agitated people that he would take care of the matter. After they left his office the chief put the signed petitions in the bottom drawer of his desk and assigned a tall policeman to stand by our building, armed to prevent any incidents from taking place. (See photo on left of Chief of Police for the Abeepura area and his wife.)

We were blessed to have a quartet to sing for our meetings many times each week. Three members of the quartet were brothers and they sang in English as well as in Indonesian. They asked me to teach them Negro Spirituals and they sang those songs excellently. Average attendance was about 400 people each night for six weeks. Little children sat on the dirt floor between the front bench and the front of the platform. Everyone enjoyed the slides which were shown on the white cloth which served as our screen and as the backdrop for the platform.

Our meetings were the biggest event happening in Abeepura. In spite of the fact that we were bombarded by big stones and clods of dirt during our services, we preached on! Even tumbleweeds were set afire and rolled down the hill toward our building. But we continued to proclaim the good news of the gospel.

And what about the big policemen who was assigned to protect us? He became so interested in our nightly services that he forsook his guarding role and sat down with his friend, the local prison director. He listened to the messages and both men were included in our first baptismal service. The Lord gave us 72 precious souls and more were added during follow-up meetings.

Today the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Abeepura has a beautiful building with Sabbath School rooms for the children and youth. It has a membership of more than 250 happy members. God turned our disappointment in being denied the opportunity of using the large Sarinah building in the capital city into a blessing for the village of Abeepura. We can always find joy in following the leadings of the Holy Spirit.
head elder of the local church and took no action until the meetings were over. We thanked God for His timely and wise intervention.

Theodore (Ted) T. Jones, II, was the first African-American to serve in the former Far Eastern Division, now Southern Asia-Pacific Division, as union evangelist and ministerial director. He and his wife, Esther, and their four children, Ted, III, Randal, Jeffrey, and Janelle, also served in Uganda during the days of Idi Amin.

Jones also served as president of the Atlantic Union Conference and as an associate secretary of the General Conference before retiring in 2005. He and Esther now reside in Topeka, Kansas, where he pastors a small congregation and does volunteer chaplain work in a juvenile maximum security prison.

I Am Satisfied!

Poe couldn’t bear the thought of alienating her parents. But when given an ultimatum between their love and God’s, there was only one choice she could make.

Poe was born and raised in Myanmar, also known as Burma. Her father worked for the government and like most of the country’s citizens, her family practiced Buddhism. When Poe was college age, a friend of her father’s invited her to visit a special college where she could learn about Christians and their God. Poe knew nothing about Christians, but it caught her interest.

As it happened, Poe’s father’s friend was an Adventist pastor and the college was an Adventist institution. When Poe enrolled in July 2005, she made sure to sign up for a religion class. She recalls that she practiced her former religion only two days after beginning school.

“My friend told me, ‘You should try to pray to God and Jesus because when you do, you will be blessed,’ ” Poe said. “So she told me how to pray.”

Poe’s interest in the new religion continued to grow and she learned more and more about Adventist beliefs. By the time she returned home at the end of the semester, she knew she wanted to become a Christian. When she told her parents she wanted to change her religion, they disapproved.

Poe’s parents told her she did not need to change religions. They said if she believed the Christians, she could “worship both religions. As for us,” they said, “we cannot worship both. We only have one god.”

Poe was surprised and disappointed when her parents told her they did not want her to continue at the Adventist college.

“I wanted to not only get an education but also learn the Bible,” she said. “I told my parents I would not change my religion if they would let me go back to college.”

After Poe finished her one-year degree in Burma, she decided to continue her education at Spicer College in India. Before Poe left for India, her parents told her again that she could not change her religion. This time, however, they went even further. Her parents said that if she did change religions they would stop supporting her and she could no longer come home.

Poe’s mother reminded her that it was okay for her to “worship both religions but not to change.”

“I did not change my religion,” Poe said, “but the whole time I worshiped Christ. I told [my parents] they should study the Bible, but they did not allow it. My father was especially strict.”

Poe longed to be baptized. In December 2006 she made up her mind.

“I was baptized January 13, 2007,” Poe recalls. “I have not told my parents because I don’t want to give them any trouble. Now I keep quiet, not for myself, but I worry for them. If they know, they will be upset and they will cut me off.”

Poe continues to pray for her family regularly. Despite not being able to share her joy with her family, Poe is happy.

“I am very satisfied to be a Christian,” she said. “I have already decided that even when I have problems I will never change. I will follow Jesus Christ because He is my savior. He is the creator. Before, I never knew about Christians. Now I am changed because Christ called me.”

Please pray for Poe, that her commitment to Jesus will remain strong as she faces opposition, and that the hearts of her family and the people of Burma will be open to receive Jesus’ love.

Story by Megan Brauner, a senior mass communications-writing/editing major at Southern Adventist University. She loves her two puppies, her MacBook Pro, and writing fun stuff. Megan is working this summer in the Office of Adventist Mission. We have blurred Poe’s photograph in order to conceal her identity.
I'm still a high school student in the Philippines, but already God has taught me a lot of important lessons, and I've seen Him working in my life.

**Up From the Bottom**

My twin brother, Rian, has always been a good student, but when I was little I preferred to play rather than study. My grades showed it— I was at the bottom of my class. My parents urged me to put aside my toys and study harder. My wonderful teacher spent time trying to help me. She said that I was smart and could do a lot better in school if I would just pay attention. I loved her and didn't want to disappoint her, so I got to work. I went from the bottom of my fifth grade class to the top!

My parents were proud of Rian and me, but I knew that it was God who'd helped me improve. I realized that I can honor Him by doing my best in school.

In the Philippines we go to high school after sixth grade. My brother and I learned about Palawan Adventist Academy (PAA), a boarding school a half hour from our home. Rian and I decided to study there.

At first I missed home so much and was so homesick that I cried. But now I'm fine as long as I can go home on weekends. I really like the school, and I can see how God is helping me grow into the person He wants me to become.

**Last-Minute Debate**

Last year the principal called some students to a meeting and told us about a debate competition in my hometown. I was excited—until she told us that the debate was the next day! Other schools had prepared for a month. But our teacher encouraged us to try the debate even though we hadn't really prepared.

I was really nervous about the debate, but our teacher reminded us to ask God to be with us and help us to honor Him, no matter what happened. We went to the debate competition and did our best. When the judges announced the winners, we were thrilled to win second place! God really does honor our best efforts when we seek to do something to honor Him. He is with us always.

**Scary Moments**

One Sunday night I returned to school really tired after a weekend at home. I went straight to bed and quickly fell asleep. I woke up to hear screaming coming from the girls' dormitory across campus.

I learned that a girl in the dormitory had been possessed by a demon. She screamed and shouted and said some terrible things. Five strong guys tried to restrain her, but she tossed them away with superhuman strength. The girls' dean called the campus pastor to pray with her and told the other girls to pray too. Soon the girl with the demon quieted down.

Later I learned that the girl had been listening to hard rock music. She thinks this is what allowed the devil to torment her. She has stopped listening to this music, and the devil has left her alone. Wow, I realize now how really important it is to guard every avenue to our minds and stay close to God in order to keep the devil away.

After dark just a few weeks ago, Dawn, a girl from the dormitory, and I were walking across campus to the principal's house with a message.

Suddenly Dawn stopped and screamed. "Snake!" she shrieked. I looked at her and saw something black wrapped around her leg. I didn't know what to do or how to help her, so I started shouting too. Poor Dawn was terrified. The girls' dean heard us shouting and came running. "Pray!" the dean said, and I prayed. The gathering students saw the snake unwrap itself from Dawn's leg and slither away! She was unhurt. What power there is in prayer!

**Lessons for the Future**

Rian and I will graduate from high school soon. I've decided to study nursing. I want my younger brother and sister to attend Palawan Adventist Academy, for this school has prepared us well for our future. I've had excellent teachers and good Christian mentoring that has taught me how to be more Christlike.

I'm excited that the academy will receive part of the Thirteenth Sabbath offering this quarter to extend its education program to include new classes in vocational and technical education. Lots of students who aren't Adventist want to enroll in these new courses so they can prepare for their future without going far from home to study. What a mission opportunity. Thank you for giving to make this a reality.

**Fast Facts**

- The Philippines was colonized by Spain for 400 years. The Spanish brought their language and their religion with them. Today the Philippines is the only predominantly Christian nation in Asia with about 94 percent of the population confessing some Christian faith. Of these, nearly 90 percent are Catholic, and...
10 percent follow various Protestant faiths.
► Roughly 555,000 Filipinos, or one in every 160 people, are members of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

Loving the Truth

My name is Lysa, and I live in the Philippines. But while I still lived in Malaysia, a friend gave me a Bible and invited me to her church. I went and found a group of loving people who drew me to God. I read the Bible and joined a small group Bible study. I surrendered my life to Christ and joined that church. I felt fulfilled and blessed.

Then my father died, and my mother felt all alone. She called me back to the Philippines to live with her and help care for my disabled sister. I returned to Philippines and began attending a church of the same denomination as the one I had left in Malaysia. But it wasn’t the same. I missed the close fellowship of loving friends who had been closer than family to me.

Then one day a man came to our home selling books. I wasn’t interested in what he had to say, but my mother invited him in and talked for a long time. Finally I began listening to them. I asked what church he belonged to, and he told me he was a Seventh-day Adventist. I hadn’t heard of Adventists before, and I asked him many questions.

He couldn’t answer all my questions that day, but he promised to return. The next day the man came back with his Bible. Again I began asking questions, and he answered each one from the Bible.

He invited me to evangelistic meetings that were being held in a church not far from our home. I went because I was thirsty for God’s Word. I attended the meetings, but the Sabbath was too strange for me to accept. I wondered why these Adventists worship on Saturday when other Christians worship on Sunday. But I was determined to study the issue for myself. If the Sabbath was true, I needed to know so I could tell my spiritual brothers and sisters in Malaysia.

I asked God to show me the truth in this Sabbath issue. I visited the library of a religious university in town searching for a book on the history of Christianity. I prayed again and opened my eyes. There was the book I was looking for. I checked it out and started reading it. Sure enough, it said that the Bible Sabbath was Saturday; men had changed the day of worship to Sunday.

I began attending the Adventist church, and in time my daughter and I were baptized. I pray for my family and for my Christian friends in Malaysia who don’t yet know this wonderful truth.

Thank you for sharing your mission offerings so that people such as I can learn to love God’s truth.

Lysa Salinas shares her faith in central Philippines.

Eighteen-year-old Mark threw the heavy fishing nets over the side of the fishing boat. A spray of cold seawater soaked his thin shirt. Mark ignored the discomfort and kept working. He had learned that it’s best not to think about that which he couldn’t have.

Mark had to quit school when his parents could no longer pay for his schoolbooks. He went to work on a fishing boat, hoping to save enough money to finish his education one day.

The owners of the fishing boat on which he worked were Christians, good people who treated him well. Although he was only one of the fishermen hired to do a job, they took time to talk with him.

One day his boss invited him to attend some evangelistic meetings his church was holding. Mark thanked him for the invitation. He remembered going to church as a child, but he had not sensed the presence of God in the church. He wished he knew more about God. Mark thought of how genuine and happy his boss seemed to be and decided to go to the meetings.

Answers and Questions
At the meetings he found answers that helped him understand God's love. He discovered truths about God he had never known, and near the end of the series he answered the invitation to be baptized. But when he told his mother of his decision, her response startled him. "You will not be baptized into the Adventist Church," she said. "And if you insist on attending that church, you will no longer be a member of this family."

Mark had not anticipated her response. But he had met Jesus at these meetings, and he was determined to follow Him. Mark continued attending the meetings and decided to be baptized, no matter what his mother said.

On Friday evening he prepared a bag of clothes for the baptism. The next morning he slipped out of the house and went to church. When he returned home, his mother saw the plastic bag filled with wet clothes and asked, "So, were you baptized?"

"Yes, Mother, I was baptized," Mark told her.

Mark's mother turned away and said no more. But in the days that followed Mark sensed that she was watching him. She noticed that when someone was angry with Mark, he would not take revenge or fight back. He became more forgiving. He did chores without grumbling, and his choice of music changed dramatically. She noticed that he had more confidence in himself and made decisions on his own. When he needed money, he went fishing to pay for his needs. She decided not to drive him away from home.

**Mark's Prayer**

Mark was happy in his new relationship with Jesus. But his yearning to finish his education only grew stronger. He knew that if he didn't do something soon, he would never finish high school. He began to pray that God would make a way for him to continue his studies.

Then one of his friends at church told him about Palawan Adventist Academy, a boarding school two hours from his home. Mark wondered whether it would ever be possible for him to study at this school. His friends encouraged him to apply for admission and told him he could work to pay his tuition. He began to dream that an education was possible.

He applied to the school and was accepted as a self-supporting student. It would be difficult, but it was possible to finish.

Mark is used to hard work and doesn't mind the work as long as he can study. He doesn't have much time for sports or other school activities, but he's getting his education.

Mark treasures the spiritual atmosphere at Palawan Adventist Academy. He has learned that Jesus is all-powerful and will provide for his needs. Mark is sharing his faith with his family. His mother and elder sister have seen the changes in Mark and are interested in attending church.

Mark feels that God is calling him to become a pastor. That means he has several more years of hard work and study once he graduates from high school. But he claims God's promise to supply all his needs through Christ Jesus. Mark asks us to pray for his family as they consider asking Jesus into their lives.

Our mission offerings support Palawan Adventist Academy as well as schools throughout the world. This quarter part of our Thirteenth Sabbath Offering will provide a new classroom block to help the school make a difference in more young people's lives.

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Thirteen-year-old Rosville opened the creaky door to her family's humble house. She walked across the creaky floor to the small back porch where her mother was working. Her mother was always working, always washing other people's clothes or caring for an elderly woman to earn a few pesos to feed the family.

"Mother, the meeting tonight was wonderful!" she said as she lifted a pile of wet clothes to hang out to dry. "The pastor told such interesting stories from the Bible—stories of how Jesus healed people. Jesus even brought some people back to life after they had died!"

"I am glad you enjoyed it," Mother said, wiping soapsuds from her hands and arms. "So, they told stories about Jesus?"

"Yes. Mother, I wish you could go to the meetings. I know you'd enjoy it." "I would like to," Mother said wearily. "But I have a lot of work to do. You know, no laundry, no pesos."

Rosville knew. Times were hard. Her father sold scrap metal for a living, but most of his earnings never made it home. He spent it on gambling and alcohol and cigarettes. Rosville often worked on Sundays to
help her mother wash clothes and earn more money. But no matter how hard they worked, it seemed there was never enough money to feed their family of seven.

Rosville was glad her mother let her and her younger sister, Rocille, attend the meetings with their neighbor. It was an oasis of happiness in a dreary world. Every night after the meeting, Rosville hurried home to help her mother work while she told her what she had learned that evening.

Living God’s Love
The evangelistic series was almost over when Mother was finally able to attend. She listened carefully to the speaker and was touched by his message. She was impressed that he based everything he said on the Bible. The few times she had attended the family’s church, the pastor seldom had read from the Bible.

When the pastor invited those who wanted to follow Jesus to stand, Rosville stood. Her mother gave her permission to prepare for baptism and attend the Adventist church, and Rosville often took her younger brothers and sister with her. She invited her mother and father to come too, and sometimes they went.

Mother noticed how obedient and helpful Rosville had become since she had given her life to God. She often saw Rosville studying her Bible lesson, and when Mother needed help, Rosville didn’t complain but willingly helped her. She could see that the church was a good influence on her daughter’s life, and Rosville was a positive influence on her brothers and sisters as well.

Changes Bring Hope
Some months later the church held another series of evangelistic meetings near the family’s home, and Rosville again invited her parents to attend. She and Rocille offered to help mother with even more work if she would just attend the meetings. To her joy, the entire family attended the meetings.

When the pastor talked about health, Rosville asked her father to stop smoking and explained that it was bad for his health and the family’s health too. Her father was touched by her concern and decided to stop smoking. Rosville continued to pray that her parents would give their hearts to God.

Rosville had planned to be baptized following the meetings; but when the pastor invited those to stand who wanted to be baptized, Rosville was overjoyed to see her parents and younger sister stand. She decided to wait and be baptized with them as a family.

Rosville’s father gave up his bad habits and began giving Mother his pay envelope every week. At last the family had enough money to buy rice to eat. Father led the family in worship every day, and their home became happy and peaceful.

Rosville’s Joy
Rosville’s parents thank their eldest daughter for sharing what she had learned during the evangelistic meetings she attended and later at church. Her example of how to live a Christian life and her invitation to attend the meetings and let God be a part of their lives changed the entire family.

Rosville encourages everyone—especially young people—to share their faith with their families. “You never know what a difference your actions will make or the happiness you can bring to your family when you tell them about God’s love,” she says.

Your mission offerings help provide the materials and equipment needed to hold successful outreach programs, not only in the Philippines, but around the world. And your prayers help make stories such as Rosville’s possible. Thank you.

Sweat trickled down young Nahob’s face and stung his eyes as he plodded barefoot down the dusty road, chanting, “Vegetables! Fresh vegetables!” His voice sounded as miserable as he felt. He missed his family, his friends, and his school.

Why did my parents make me stay here with my brother? he wondered. Do they know he won’t let me go to school? Do they know he beats me if I don’t earn enough money? Do they care?

Nahob was just 10 years old when his family left him in Palawan with his elder brother. His brother told him he could quit school and work with him. Nahob didn’t want to live in Palawan. But in the end he was left behind. Before long his brother’s smiles turned to threats, and the truth settled in. Nahob wouldn’t get to go to school. He wouldn’t return home. He was a slave forced to sell vegetables for his brother. If he didn’t return home with enough money, his brother beat him. He thought of running away, but he feared his brother’s threats. He lived without hope.

Flee From Slavery
Four years passed, and Nahob grew taller, sturdier, and stronger under the load of work his brother piled upon him. One day he decided he wouldn’t take his brother’s iron fist any longer. He ran away.
He found work as a cook's assistant on a fishing boat that sailed to another island. He left the boat there and found work as a houseboy. Any work was better than slavery. The woman he worked for was kind to him, but her husband was not. She gave him his room and board, but her husband's promises of pay disappeared like the morning dew. Nahob worked for the couple for a year without pay before he realized that he was as much a slave as he had ever been. When he decided to leave, his master burned his belongings. And when his wife tried to help him, the man beat Nahob. Despite his fear, Nahob waited for the right time, and then he fled.

He found work on a fishing boat and sent money home to his brother and his parents. He wanted them to know he was a good boy. One day he decided to return to visit his brother. To his joy his brother greeted him warmly and showed Nahob a piece of land he had bought with the money Nahob had sent.

More Treachery
Nahob decided to stay and farm the land his brother had bought. His brother let him keep the money he earned from the crops he raised. At last Nahob felt free! When a storm damaged crops in his area, Nahob helped the farmers.

Then one day he learned that his brother had arranged for him to marry an older woman. The familiar feeling of fear returned. He didn't want to marry a girl he didn't know and tried to get out of the arrangement, but his brother threatened him. Only when he agreed to marry her in three years, when he would turn 20, did his brother allow him to leave to begin building up his savings.

He left his brother's home and traveled to another island, where he established a small store to support himself. He ignored the woman to whom he was engaged, and eventually she called off the wedding. At last he was free—again!

Reviving an Old Dream
Nahob keenly felt his lack of education, especially when people teased him about it. He decided to return to school and get the education he had been denied. So at age 18 he enrolled in the fourth grade.

His teacher was an Adventist man who invited him to church. At first Nahob refused because he worked on Saturdays, but eventually he went. He listened to the Bible lesson and felt he had found something that made sense. He asked his teacher to study the Bible with him. Through his teacher he met another Adventist teacher who suggested that he study at Palawan Adventist Elementary School. Nahob was accepted and began his studies there in grade six.

At Palawan Adventist Academy Nahob's life changed for the better. He was baptized and found in the school family the family he had missed so much during his growing-up years. They helped to broaden his horizons and expand his dreams. They gave him a vision for what God can do through him. Nahob has become a spiritual leader on the campus and has reconciled with his brother. "I once was a slave, but now I have true freedom in Christ."

Our mission offerings help support our Adventist school system which brings young people to Christ and trains them for service. Thank you for giving.

Fast Facts
Palawan is a long, narrow island to the west of most of the islands that make up the Philippines. Mountains form the backbone of the island, but one is never far from the sea.

My name is Rey, and I live on the island of Palawan in the Philippines. God rescued me from the path of destruction and placed me on the path to everlasting life.

I dropped out of high school because gang activity was dangerous there. I began hanging out with my cousins and some friends. We didn't consider ourselves a gang because we just spent time together. But then we began doing things that gang members did. We smoked, drank, and sometimes we threw rocks at passing cars. We were never caught, but my parents knew we were causing trouble.

Unwelcome House Guests
Then one day I returned home from work and found two young people sitting in the living room. My grandmother said they were members of a youth team who were preparing for evangelistic meetings. These young people were really religious. I didn't dare smoke or drink while they were around. I wished they would leave because they were stifling my fun.

I'd come home from work and find the young people sitting in the living room singing and talking about Jesus. I would walk straight to my room, but I could still hear them singing and praying. And I began to listen.

I wondered what made these young people so different, so happy. And they talked so easily about God.
Their behavior planted a seed inside my heart, and I realized they had something that my friends and I didn’t have. In time I joined them for their worship, and when they invited me to attend the youth meetings, I agreed to go.

When my friends learned that I was going to religious meetings, they started teasing me. But instead of quitting, I kept going. I even joined a Bible study group. Before long the bad habits that I had taken up lost their appeal, and I gave them up. I wanted to change, and I wanted to give God a chance in my life.

When my parents learned of my decision they were surprised and pleased. They hoped that religion would change the negative course of my life. My mom even bought me a new set of clothes for the Sabbath of my baptism. They attended church that day, but they didn’t make a decision for Christ.

**Stumble Along the Path**

After my baptism I decided to go back to school in spite of the gang activity that still bothered me. But things didn’t go as I had hoped. My friends, and even my cousins, had pretty much given up on me. They still teased me about being “too good” for them. It was hard to go from respected to disrespected, from being included to being excluded. I felt all alone at school with no one to share my troubles.

Finally I couldn’t stand it anymore. I got so angry about the teasing that I rejoined the gang. Within a short time the high school suspended all gang members, and suddenly I was back where I’d begun, a gang member and a school dropout.

I felt alone, but God hadn’t left me; I’d left Him. He still had plans for me.

A church member invited me to help with an evangelistic series, and I said yes. I went with others to visit people and learned how to give Bible studies. I became part of a new “gang,” a gang for God. Once more I found my footing and my love for Jesus.

I was asked to be a leader in a youth evangelism series, and I organized some meetings near my mom’s house. My mom brought my brother and sister to the meetings, and other family members came as well. I preached three nights, and at the end of the series 11 family members were baptized!

**God of Second Chances**

Some young people in the church urged me to return to school and suggested I attend Palawan Adventist Academy, which was free of gang activity. I was accepted and am now attending school and enjoying the spiritual atmosphere there. It’s tough to work enough to pay my school fees, but I’m trying really hard to finish this time.

As I look back on the past few years, I’m so thankful for the way God turned my life around. He took me from being a gang leader and school dropout, to being a youth leader and a student with a future. God is so good at new beginnings!

Part of this quarter’s Thirteenth Sabbath Offering will help to establish a technical and vocational school at Palawan Adventist Academy where I study. I hope it will be finished when I graduate so I can study mechanics there.

**Fast Facts**

► The Philippines is a nation made up of more than 7,000 islands. Most of the people live on the 11 largest islands.

► Much of the land is mountainous, and some of the mountains are volcanoes. Several of these volcanoes have erupted in recent years, destroying villages and farmland and even killing people who did not leave the area in time.

► The official language in the Philippines is Filipino, but English is widely spoken.

I was a fervent member of my church in central Philippines. I saw my religion as the stairway to heaven. Every act of worship, every good deed was a step on my stairway to heaven.

Then an Adventist man held evangelistic meetings in our town. Imagine my surprise when my husband went. I was horrified when he forsook our faith and joined the Adventists! I was so upset! When he went to give a Bible study, I tried to stop him. And when I learned that someone was thinking about joining the Adventist Church, I pleaded with them not to do it. My husband was upset, but he said nothing.

**Life-Changing Dream**

Then one night I had a dream in which I saw a golden ladder reaching to heaven. At the top of the ladder I could see palaces of gold. I wanted to climb the ladder, but I noticed that the other people on the ladder were dressed in white, and I wasn’t. Then a handsome being floating above me said, “Step onto the ladder with your right foot.” I tried to lift my right foot to the ladder, but I couldn’t step onto the first rung. I struggled for several minutes, then I heard the handsome being say that I must not try to climb the ladder for I wasn’t ready for heaven yet. “Go home and wash yourself, for you are not clean,” the being said. I cried, for I didn’t want to leave this ladder to heaven. But I obeyed.
Before I turned to go home and wash, I looked once more toward heaven. But everything was gone. In its place a large black cloud filled the sky. Lightning lit up the cloud, and I was afraid. I fell on my knees and prayed that God would save me from the storm. Then I heard a voice from heaven say, "Repent and be baptized in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit for the forgiveness of your sin." Then I woke up. I knew that this was not just a dream; this was a message from God.

Obedience and Repentance
I had a Bible and had studied the Bible study guides with my husband. But while he humbly accepted God's salvation, my pride had made me reject God's call. Instead I persecuted my husband and others who sought to follow God. But God had humbled me, and I studied the Bible lessons once more and read the texts in my Bible. I asked my husband to forgive me, and I asked the pastor to baptize me.

Then I went to those who I had persecuted, those who I had tried to persuade not to follow the Adventist teachings. I asked their forgiveness and told them that the Adventist Church was the true church. I urged them to follow God's leading and be baptized.

But members of my former church were unhappy with me and harassed me. The church leaders called me to appear before a council and explain why I had left their church. When I arrived, the priest urged me to stop this nonsense and return to the church. But I told him, "The Bible speaks of the Sabbath, and God commanded us to keep sacred His holy day." Our priest warned me not to speak to others of my new beliefs, but I told him that I had to tell others of this truth.

Saul to Paul
I'm still going to the people I persecuted and offering to study the Bible with them. Some have been baptized, and a church has been started in our area. When I'm tempted to stop visiting people, I remember that I wasn't ashamed to persecute those who would follow Jesus, and now I'm not ashamed to admit that I was wrong and urge people to follow Jesus, not people.

My husband and I are united in love for God and love for giving Bible studies to lead others to Jesus. We're going to another area several miles from our home, where we give Bible studies. We're raising up another church in that area.

I use my work as a day care worker to teach the little children God's truths. Then I visit their parents' homes and offer to study with them. Praise God some of these children and their families are in the church now, too.

It took awhile for me to wake up and realize that the Adventists teach God's truth, but in time I did, and I'm a trophy for Jesus. I thank you for giving your mission offerings to help people such as me learn that God loves them.

Fast Facts
About one in every 100 people is an Adventist in central Philippines. That means that 99 out of every 100 are not Adventists. Many towns and villages have few or no Adventist believers. Lay workers such as Procesa and her husband actively hold Bible studies, small group outreaches, and evangelistic efforts in their neighborhood and nearby towns and villages. Pray that God will increase their strength as they share their faith with others.

Enesto is a farmer in central Philippines. For years he was an active member of his charismatic church. But one day Ernesto's priest said something that made him think. "Your body is the temple of God," the priest said in worship. Ernesto nodded. It made sense. But later Ernesto remembered that the priest smoked. How can he say that our bodies are God's temple if he doesn't treat his body as a temple? Ernesto wondered. He asked the priest to explain it. "How can our bodies be God's temples, and yet you smoke?" Startled by Ernesto's question, the priest fumbled for an answer but found none. Dissatisfied, Ernesto went home.

Evangelistic Meetings
Ernesto is the neighborhood captain. A few days later when some Adventists asked him for a permit to hold evangelistic meetings, Ernesto agreed.

As he watched the Adventists prepare for their meetings, Ernesto noted they had no sound system. Ernesto offered them his own sound system. The Adventist pastor thanked Ernesto and added, "We appreciate your generosity, my friend, but you must come and operate the sound system to be sure that it is properly set up." Ernesto agreed, pleased that the Adventists respected his equipment. As Ernesto operated the sound system for the meetings, he listened to the sermons. He was impressed and began inviting others to attend the meetings with him.

The pastor often chatted with Ernesto before the meetings.
At the end of the evangelistic meetings, 25 people were baptized, including Ernesto and his wife and two of his children. They became active church members. He learned how to give Bible studies, and a year after his own baptism he held a series of evangelistic meetings in which 14 precious people were baptized, including three of his own children.

The Priest’s Plan
When the priest of Ernesto’s former church learned that Ernesto and his family had become Adventists, he decided to fight fire with fire. He gave each family in the church a Bible and urged them to read it. “Read so you can be prepared if Ernesto or anyone else tries to beguile you away from the true church,” the priest said. Some of the members began reading the Bible, and before long they began to notice that the Bible and the church teachings did not always agree. One member noticed that the Bible condemns eating unclean meats, and another questioned the commandment that they should not bow down to idols. The members confronted the priest with their questions. The priest read the passages the members showed him. After a long moment he answered, “The Adventists cannot be faulted for refusing to worship idols or eat unclean meats, for it is found in the Bible.”

Then a member asked, “Why is it that Seventh-day Adventists worship on Saturday, when we worship on Sunday? I cannot find Sunday mentioned in the whole Bible.” The priest thought a moment then said, “I think the Adventists are right to worship on Saturday. But our church worships on Sunday.”

After hearing what the priest said about the Bible, several of these families welcomed Adventists to study the Bible with them, and eventually they were baptized into the Adventist Church.

God’s Church Grows
The church in Ernesto’s area continues to grow, and today it numbers 60 members, in part because Ernesto loves to give Bible studies. A neighboring congregation has asked Ernesto to help teach them how to give Bible studies and grow their own church. Ernesto agreed, and after giving Bible studies and holding an evangelistic series, 21 people were baptized. Ten of these joined the struggling village church, and the other 11 joined the larger church in Ernesto’s village.

Ernesto thanks God for helping him discover the wonderful Bible truths he loves so much. And he thanks his former priest for giving Bibles to his congregation. More than 50 former members of this church have become Seventh-day Adventists, and others are still studying.

Our mission offerings help make evangelism possible throughout the Philippines and around the world. Only eternity will reveal how many learned to love God because of your faithful gifts.

The ropes bit into Bien’s wrists as she struggled to free herself. Before they left to get gas for the boat’s engine, her brothers had tied her to the small boat to take Bien away so she couldn’t attend the heretics’ church she had been visiting. She called to some friends to help her, and they quickly untied the ropes holding her prisoner. Bien struggled to her feet and ran with her friends to hide before her brothers returned.

Stubborn Daughter
Bien’s family was angry because she had been attending the Adventist church, and her brothers were trying to force her to go to the island where her grandmother lived to keep her away from the church.

“Is church worth all of this trouble?” One of her friends asked.

“I’ve learned that God loves me, that Jesus died for me, and that He wants me to follow Him.” Bien explained. “I want to be His daughter, even if it means losing my own family.”

Bien ran to the pastor’s house and told him and his wife what had happened, and they agreed to let her stay with them for awhile. Three days later Bien’s mother knocked on the pastor’s door.

When the pastor opened the door, Bien’s mother saw Bien and lunged at her.

“Stop!” the pastor’s wife said. “You can’t take her away.” Bien’s mother let her go and turned to face the pastor’s wife. “We’re concerned about her,” the pastor’s wife continued. “Can we talk?” Bien’s mother finally agreed to leave after the pastor promised to bring Bien home later.

Bien was afraid, but she knew she couldn’t stay with the pastor forever.

Scary Confrontation
When Bien and the pastor arrived at Bien’s home, the pastor noticed Bien’s parents had calmed down, so
when her parents asked to speak to Bien privately, he agreed. After he left, her parents lashed out at her.

"You’re going to go live with your grandmother, where you won’t find any Adventists."

Bien refused to show fear, but she did not want to go live with her grandmother. She wanted to go to school, but that was impossible on the island. She refused to be separated from the people at the church who prayed for her and encouraged her. When her parents realized that she would resist their efforts, they sent all her things to her grandmother’s house, leaving Bien with nothing.

Finally Bien returned to the pastor’s house. It was her fifteenth birthday. She borrowed clothes from a friend so she could go to school, but then she realized that she didn’t have her textbooks and couldn’t attend without them. So she looked for work with someone in her church. She was sad that she couldn’t complete her studies.

She continued attending church and studying her Bible. And following evangelistic meetings, she asked to be baptized.

**Unexpected Blessing**

Then the family who had sponsored the evangelistic meetings learned about Bien’s situation and visited her parents. They offered to take Bien to the Adventist academy on the island of Palawan and agreed to pay for her studies. Imagine Bien’s joy when she learned that her parents had agreed to let her go.

Bien had never been so far from home, and the thought frightened her a bit. But the pastor assured her that she would love studying at the Adventist school. She reminded herself that her prayer to continue her studies was being answered. She packed her few belongings and set off for the Adventist school.

The principal took Bien into her own home and provided work for her so she could earn money for her necessities. “I am so blessed to have so many people looking out for me,” Bien says. “It’s so good to be back in school! The academy has become my refuge and my haven. When I finish high school I want to help others who have problems, just as I was helped. I want to defend what is right and stand for the truth.”

Bien asks us to pray for her family—her parents and nine siblings—who still don’t know Jesus as she does.

And let’s continue to give faithfully to mission so that others in the Philippines and throughout the world can know that Jesus is not only their Savior but their friend and brother as well.

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**THIS Is Not Christmas!**

By Mary Lyon Hellman

Just after celebrating my eight birthday in December 1963, my three sisters and I were looking forward to Christmas in Bandung, Indonesia. Wait a minute. **THIS is not Christmas!** It was boiling hot and humid. We were wearing summer shirts and shorts. No snow, no Christmas lights around town or on our neighbors houses, and not one Santa Claus in sight.

I remember when our little school put on a Christmas program for all the missionary parents. There were only about 15 of us grades 1-8. As we stood up front my voice turned squeaky because I started thinking about Mom and Dad. They were spending Christmas in a foreign land away from their parents, brothers, and their families. They wouldn’t be at the old farm in Iowa or the little town in South Dakota where snow and the sights and sounds of the season were everywhere. Here we stood belting out Christmas songs in the heat of the humid evening as our parents looked on with admiration. My voice cracked because I was near tears for them! They must have been proud of us kids trying our best to share some of the holiday spirit with them.

The highlight of that Christmas was receiving boxes from our grandparents from back home. How delighted we were to receive brand new coloring books and crayons, and books like Black Beauty to read. We knew they missed us as much as we missed them. The excitement of getting boxes of Jello and cake mixes was amazing. They were put aside for very special occasions.

My family made it through that first year and continued through another year in Indonesia, two years in Japan where we had a white Christmas, and six years in Singapore where we swam in the local pool every Christmas day. Our tree there was made out of white plastic with just a tiny tint of blue. We thought that was really cool.

These are my memories of Christmas in the mission field. I will remember these all the rest of my life.

"My Dad showed up at my school in Des Moines, Iowa, while I was in the first grade," says Mary Hellman. "He took me out, and told me we were going to the mission field. At that time I imagined we would all soon be wearing khaki shorts and shirts and helmets. We would be mingling amongst the snakes in the bushes. It did not turn out that way.

I was seven when we arrived in Indonesia, celebrated my 10th & 11th birthdays in Japan, then celebrated my 12th through 17th
birthdays in Singapore. My sisters and I are really close to this day. We were each other's best friends while living overseas and still remain best friends today. We saw a lot of things. Poverty, sadness, filthy situations along with the joy of trying new fruits in the far east. The native people were surviving the best they new how. They all seemed to enjoy the four of us traipsing through their cities and villages. Today, I am the church secretary for Hood View Church in Boring, Oregon. I married Mike Hellman whom I met while at Far Eastern Academy in Singapore and we have two wonderful sons."--Mary

FUN FACTS

Photographs:
1. Lyon sisters in Japan from rear left: Susan, Mary, Sandy, and Nancy.
2. Lyons in Singapore: Susan, Mary, Nancy, and Sandy with parents Marge and Mel.

The secular celebration of Christmas is popular in Japan although it's not a national holiday. The growth of the Adventist Church in Japan is slow where only one out of every 8,500 is an Adventist. But there is exciting growth among immigrants. Because of the low birth rate of the Japanese, the country has suffered a shortage of laborers and has invited people from other countries who have a Japanese background to immigrate as guest workers. Part of the Thirteenth Sabbath Offering for fourth quarter, 2008, will help establish a Chinese language church in Tokyo.

On the day I graduated from college with a degree in computer engineering, I was on top of the world. I immediately began job hunting, applying for work at several firms. But I had no idea how hard it would be to find a job. I widened the net and applied for any job I saw advertised. Finally I was offered a job—as an agent in a call center. It wasn't the job I had hoped for, but after praying about it I decided to take it. At least it was a start.

Another Option

The next Sabbath at church the pastor stopped me to talk. He knew that I was looking for work and asked a question that surprised me, “Have you considered being a missionary?”

“No,” I admitted. I hadn’t even thought about being a missionary. “Is that possible?” I asked.

“Yes,” he answered. “Have you heard about the Thousand Missionary Movement? It’s a denominationally sponsored organization that trains and sends out young people such as you to work as a missionary for a year. They train you for three months then they place you in a position somewhere in Asia. You can gain good experience working as a missionary.”

It sounded good, so I promised to think about it.

Praying for God's Leading

And I did think about it. But I had already accepted the job at the call center. And I didn’t know whether I really even wanted to be a missionary. The idea was just so new. Would serving God this way set me on my chosen career path? I just couldn’t decide what to do.

Then the phone rang. It was someone from the call center where I had been hired. He asked me to come in to the center Saturday to sign my employment contract. My heart skipped a beat as I told him that I would not be working on Saturdays, my Sabbath. “This isn’t work,” he said. “Just come in and sign your contract. You don’t even need to stay for orientation.”

“I’m sorry, I cannot do that,” I said. While the caller tried to think of what to say, I realized that perhaps this was the sign I had prayed for, a sign that I shouldn’t take this job. I told the caller that I wouldn’t be working at the center.

A weight lifted from my mind, and suddenly the path seemed clear. I would become a missionary.

I filled out the application forms and sent them to the Thousand Missionary Movement. Soon I received word that I had been accepted.

Following the Call

I traveled to the training center outside Manila and underwent three months of training. I lived with people from many different places and different cultures. It was an unforgettable experience learning to trust solely in God. I learned how to listen to His voice and how to be humble and patient.

When our training was complete, we received our posting orders. The 137 graduates in my group were sent to China, Japan, Indonesia, Korea, and throughout the Philippines. I went to Korea, which was a surprise. I thought I would go to the northern Philippines. But I trusted that this was where God wanted me to go. I was sent to a city where none of the Thousand Missionary Movement missionaries had worked before.
My assignment was to teach English and Bible to children in a community near a small Adventist church. I taught young children during the day, adults in the afternoon, and high school students on the weekends. I wanted to show those I met that God is love, so I started learning Korean so I could speak with the people.

I loved my work at the school, and I decided to stay longer than my one-year assignment. But then I got sick and was forced to return home. By this time I hated the thought of leaving my new friends, those I had learned to cherish, those to whom I was ministering.

I now understand the motto of the Thousand Missionary Movement: “Once a missionary, always a missionary.” If I have the chance to go back, I will. But I’m not sure what God has in mind for me. I know that whatever He has for me to do, I can trust Him to lead me to it.

Our mission offerings a few years ago helped get the Thousand Missionary Movement started. What a blessing it’s been to the missionaries and to those they’ve led to the Lord. It’s sure been a blessing to me! Thank you!

**Fast Facts**
Since the 1000 Missionary Movement was started in Asia in 1992, hundreds of young people have been trained and sent out to serve in 40 countries in Asia, Africa, Europe, North and South America, and the islands of the Pacific. These volunteer missionaries have led thousands to Jesus. They return to their homelands (most are from Philippines and Korea) changed young adults who carry a vision of God’s commission with them. Pray for the staff, the missionaries, and the sponsors who work together to make this an exciting and viable mission program.