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Cover: Volunteer Marina Goncharova spent a year volunteering in Denmark. Story on page 8.
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Dear Friends,

I am currently serving in Chillán, Chile and I love it! Since March (the start of the academic year here), I have been serving at the Universidad Adventista de Chile and it has been an amazing experience.

One of my duties is to have structured conversations with approximately 35 English students each week. I have been working primarily with the first-year students and it has been incredible to watch them learn and grow as they take their classes at this Christian university and practice their language skills.

In addition to the English conversations, I am also involved in a number of other activities here at the university. These vary depending on the week, but they typically include helping out in one of the Sabbath School programs on campus, photographing activities and events, and assisting professors and students with various tasks and programs.

For many of the first-year students who live in the dormitories, this is their first time away from home. It has been very rewarding to watch them mature, overcome their hesitation and get involved with church and school programs. My time here has been valuable for me as well, as I continue on the path to Spanish fluency. At times the work is challenging but I thank God for the opportunity to spend a year here in service to Him.

¡Que Dios les bendiga! [God bless!]

Tim Delinger

Originally from the USA, Tim is serving in Chile.
Whatever your cross,
Whatever your pain,
There will always be sunshine,
after the rain....

Perhaps you may stumble,
perhaps even fall;
But God’s always ready,
to answer your call....

He knows every heartache,
sees every tear,
A word from His lips,
can calm every fear...

Your sorrows may linger,
throughout the night,
But suddenly vanish,
by dawn’s early light...

The Savior is waiting,
somewhere above,
To give you His grace,
and send you His love.

Author Unknown
“But my Compass Don’t Point North!”

There he stood, covered with mud and bloody scratches, slowly pulling a dripping compass from his pocket. I asked him why he had crossed the road when I had specifically told him not to. With his head down and tears making paths on his muddy cheeks he mumbled, “’Cause my compass don’t point North.”

It was the same excuse I had heard from Peter that entire week. But this time I didn’t try to argue with him. I just put my arm around his sagging shoulders and we started to walk through the rain back to camp. I didn’t know what to say. I was only a teenager myself. But I knew one thing—Peter had wanted desperately to pass this orienteering class. In fact, he just wanted to pass something, anything. He had told me earlier that he was always a failure. His mom had told him that over and over again. He had failed first grade and then failed second grade. He had failed to keep his mom and dad’s marriage together. And now he had failed orienteering!

That was Friday evening. All day Sabbath I couldn’t get Peter out of my mind. And all day my heart ached as I watched his sad eyes and drooping shoulders. “But Lord,” I whispered, “I tried everything. What more can I do? He didn’t pass and I can’t give him the honor patch if he didn’t pass!”

Saturday night was the awards program. Peter was making loud body noises, poking little girls, hitting boys, tipping over his chair. He wasn’t getting any honors though; he had failed swimming, orienteering, and even crafts that week.

And then suddenly it hit me. I knew what I needed to do! Why hadn’t I thought of it before?

After the program, I slipped up to Peter and whispered, “Hey Peter, do you want to try again?”

For just an instant I saw a spark of hope in his eyes, but it quickly disappeared. “Won’t do no good. I never pass nothin!” he muttered angrily.

I ignored his comment and went on, “Peter, let’s meet by the corner of the café just as it gets light tomorrow morning. I will take you back out into the woods and let you do the test again. I think you can make it this time.”

Peter grunted but didn’t commit himself. I went to bed wondering if he would come. Early the next morning I went to the corner of the café. It was still raining and wasn’t even light yet. But there he was. His hair and coat already very wet.
We walked in silence to the starting point of the test. We prayed. Peter looked at his compass, sighted down it to a tree in the distance and looked questioningly at me. I gave him a big smile and thumbs up. After that, Peter started off into the semi-darkness slowly, deliberately, one step at a time, his compass out and being used!

Back at the edge of the camp I waited anxiously, my eyes scanning the woods, my ears straining for any sound of an approaching boy. Would he make it? Or would I have to find him in some far off, dripping swamp again?

And then I saw him. He didn’t see me; he was so intent on his compass and course. But I saw him and he was right on track! I stifled my excitement and waited. And then it happened! He glanced up and saw me. For an instant there was fear written all across that face that was so used to failure. But then he saw my smile and with a shout that probably woke up the entire camp he rushed through the bushes and hugged me.

“I passed. I passed. Didn’t I? I know I passed!” he said jumping in circles around me.

“Yes, Peter,” I said, tears of joy mixing with the rain drops running down my face, “you passed!” I handed him the little honor patch I had been carrying in my pocket.

An hour or two later his mother arrived. Before her car had even stopped, Peter was running around and around it shouting, “Mommy, I passed. Mommy, I passed!” and holding up his honor patch. My heart cringed as she got out without even looking at it, grunted, and pushed past him to the office. The only thing I saw that made her excited that morning was when the camp director told her someone had paid so Peter could stay another week. Glad to be rid of him for a few more days, she climbed into the old car and sped off as he stood holding his patch and watching the dust disappear around the corner.

I was just a teenager. I didn’t have a degree in psychology, I had never been a parent. But I knew that Peter needed love. He needed someone to care about him. He needed someone to believe in him. He needed someone to give him another chance—over and over again. I don’t know if the other staff and I succeeded in making any lasting difference for Peter but I continue to hope and pray we might have given him at least a fighting chance. And someday, as we stand around the Tree of Life, maybe Peter and I can join another Peter who at one point needed Someone to give him chance after chance.

Whatever your volunteer assignment may be, you can be sure that God will place people around you who need to know you care. It won’t always be easy. They are sometimes obnoxious and we are often exhausted with trying. But don’t give up. Jesus hasn’t given up on you. And what you do for these children of His (young or old) will result in some pretty amazing reunions as you meet them again in heaven.

* Note: If you didn’t see the first part of the story in my last editorial, you can still read it on our website. Go to www.AdventistVolunteers.org, click on “Publications” and then “Volume 11 Number 3.” This link should take you directly to that issue of Mission Post: http://www.adventistvolunteers.org/MissionPost/v11n3/v11n3.pdf
My desire to be a volunteer was born many years ago when I was taking a medical missionary course in Norway. The purpose of the course wasn’t to train missionaries specifically, but was to give general knowledge about healthy lifestyles and ways in which the health message could be used in the mission field. What really inspired me to be a missionary was the story of a German couple who are missionaries in Brazil. When they told their story and showed some pictures of their missionary work, I was so impressed that I told myself this was what I would like to do with my life.

After the course in Norway, years passed. I had a position doing a type of medical missionary work in Russia (where I am from) and in Ukraine. Then I got a job working for a church organization. For a while, I was occupied with church work and was very content with it. From time to time, my dream of going somewhere as a volunteer came to mind, but because of different circumstances, I never had the opportunity.

One day a friend of mine suggested that I should go to England to serve in one of our Adventist schools there. She had found some positions on the Adventist Volunteers website and thought I might be interested. I am a teacher and child psychologist by profession, and I love children and enjoy working with them. Thus, I was very excited about the idea; I thought this was probably the time and place that God wanted me to be a volunteer. My friend and I both sent our applications for consideration, but soon...
I was so disappointed! I experienced deep confusion and frustration, not because I wasn’t accepted for the position, but because I felt that God had let me down. For so many years, I had dreamed and prayed for the opportunity to become a volunteer, and, now, when I thought I had gotten the opportunity, I immediately lost it. I couldn’t understand God or His ways. It was a very hard time in my life, much harder than I can now express. I almost gave up on my dream.

A few days after that, though, one of my friends sent me a message with the words that changed my view on the situation and, further, my life: “Don’t ask God to bless your plans; ask Him to show you His plans, because they are already blessed.” It was those words that helped me to get through my disappointment and persuaded me not to give up! I printed the quote out and put it on my wall. Every day I looked at it and prayed, asking God to show me His plans for me. Little by little, my life went back to its normal routine and I hid my dream of being a volunteer somewhere inside of me; I didn’t want to disturb it.

Again, years passed. Some of my friends, knowing about my dream and the disappointment I had experienced, tried to persuade me to apply again for another position. But I waved away their arguments, saying that I didn’t want to experience another disappointment and that I was not ready for a volunteer position. I told my friends that when it was God’s time, He would reveal it to me and open the way for me to go.

Finally, after years, God’s time came! At the beginning of summer 2007,
some events happened in my life which prompted me to once again think about my dream to be a volunteer. One day I went on the Volunteer website (just to take a look) and I found an Assistant Dean position at an Adventist school in Norway. I have always loved Norway! I have wonderful memories of my studies there. Later, during a conversation with my friends, I quickly mentioned the position in Norway. In one voice, my friends all told me that I must apply for it. Strangely, even though I was trying to decide against the idea, I felt that I should at least give it a try. So I did.

I applied for the position and then went on vacation. When I was on vacation, I received a reply. The position in Norway was no longer available. Another disappointment… But this time it was much easier to handle. And actually I didn’t have much time to handle it, because a couple of days later I got another email in which I was offered the same position, but in Denmark.

At first, I wanted to turn it down, but then I recalled the words on my wall about God’s plans. So, I said to the Lord that if Denmark was the place He wanted me to go, I was ready to go and I believed He would open the way. For Russians, it is not easy to get visas (especially the working and residence visas I needed) to some countries. So, I put everything into God’s hands as I started the visa process. It took me some time to get approval from the General Conference, my calling Division, and the school in Denmark. After that, it only took one month for me to get my visa. And that is a very short time; sometimes it takes half a year to get a visa! This time around, I felt God’s leading was very evident, and I was sure about God’s will for me. I recalled one of my favorite Bible verses: “For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the LORD” (Isaiah 55:8).

Finally everything was set, and I left for Denmark. My nine months of volunteer service there were not easy. I faced many
challenges and even experienced culture shock (even though throughout my life I have lived in different cultures and worked with people from different countries). But all of that helped me to rely on God not just every day of my life, but literally every minute of it. I enjoyed working with the students. It is one of the things I’ve done that has given me great satisfaction. I can’t say (at least right now) that because of me, someone’s life was changed. However, I truly believe that God used me to sow seeds during my time in Denmark. The circle of students I worked with was mainly non-Adventist; some of them didn’t even believe in God. I still keep in contact with some of them, and I pray that one day God will reveal the great and wonderful work He has done through my weak efforts.

My volunteer service in Denmark strengthened my desire to do missionary work in the future. My greatest and most long-standing dream is to work with orphan children. I believe God will help me to fulfill this dream one day. Right now, I am just waiting for Him to show me the right time and place.

God is good! 🙏

Marina Goncharova, a native of Russia, ended her volunteer service in June of 2008.
For several weeks now, my brother and I have been planting a new church in the city where we are volunteering. Now, this isn’t unusual; it’s what is expected of missionaries and volunteers. The part that makes this story a little more unique is where we are working in the city. You see, the field we’re sowing and watering happens to be inside a mosque. How did we choose this place as our mission field, you might ask? Well, we didn’t. God simply led us there. Neither one of us is an expert in Christian-Muslim relations, neither has a background in Islamic studies and while both of us have a heart for the kingdom, neither one of us came to this country with grand plans to begin work among Muslim believers. Our volunteer assignment in this city is, in fact, something entirely different. For the most part, our witness has been after work while serving a local church and helping with their Friday night Bible study group. But a number of weeks ago that changed.

One of the people we serve is a fairly enthusiastic young man; he’s also a fairly devout Muslim and after a few meetings, he learned that I was interested in Islam. Now, I need to tell you, my interest at the time was more academic than practical. I thought this young man might be able to tell me some things that would help me in the future. But God had different plans, and the young man invited me to come to his mosque with him the next Friday. So I went with him, still thinking this would be a great chance to learn something I might be able to use in the future.

On this first trip to the mosque, I was fascinated by the practice of the Muslim religion, I was enthralled by the architecture of the mosque and, most of all, I was impressed by the character of the people. Three things struck me. The first was that I didn’t see a single person there who appeared to be a terrorist. Now, I don’t mean that as a joke. I vividly remember September 11, 2001. For seven years after that day, I had prejudices ingrained in me by North American society, and although I knew not all Muslims were terrorists, I expected to meet a few at this mosque. I’m happy to report I did not! The second thing that impressed me from the visit was the number of young men sincerely seeking God as they know Him. This mosque is close to two universities, so it’s convenient for students to get to, and they are serious about what they believe. The third thing which I found was that they were exceptionally welcoming to this North American who clearly was not one of them.
After the prayer service, we tried to go to a nearby café for tea and a conversation, but the café was closed. So the first meeting ended with a friendly embrace and an invitation to come again the following week. The second week came and this time I took my brother with me to the mosque. We went together and, once again, we prayed with our friend. However, this week after the service, things were different. The café was open, so we went in and shared tea and cakes, and we talked about personal things. Up until now, I still thought that we were just learning and making a good friendship. We actually are doing these things. This is not some sort of “covert operation.” We genuinely do want to learn more about the local culture and religion; we also want to develop a close friendship with the people here. If those are the only things we accomplish, then it will still be worthwhile, but we’re also praying for our friends, and God does things when you pray!

The third week came and I was on my own this time; my brother couldn’t come. This week I could feel something was different. I’d been praying a lot before I went to the mosque this particular Friday, and I’d asked God to make me a witness to these people. Be careful what you pray for! God answered my prayer with a resounding “yes.” This time, after the prayer service, we went for tea again, but instead of it just being a personal visit with a friend I already knew, the young man brought along several others. One of them was the Imam [spiritual leader] who had just led the prayer service. I’m glad my initial fascination with the different style of prayer and the architecture of the mosque had passed the week before. This time, I’d spent the hour in the mosque saying my own silent prayers, and, as it turned out, I needed that time with God more than I could have imagined.

As we sat down to eat and have tea, I paused for a moment of silent prayer—although I think I forgot to ask God’s blessing on the food. I was praying more about what to say to the Imam. Then came the question. This question will inevitably be asked of any foreigner who spends any significant amount of time with Muslims and the answer pretty much determines your future relationship with them. The Imam asked me, “Are you a Muslim?”

Now you have three choices. You can say, “No, I am a Christian,” and they’ll be polite for the remainder of your last meeting with them. You can say, “Yes, I am,” and then when they ask you to recite the creed, you either have to pledge that Mohamed is the prophet of God or tell them that you just lied to them. Or, you can give the third answer, which is the recommended answer for people who want to witness to Muslims: “What do you mean by that?”

Praise God that the Holy Spirit imparted to me the wisdom to answer in the third way. We then went through a series of questions and established that my father is not a Muslim, that I have submitted my life to Allah’s will and that I don’t

“What do you mean by that?”
know enough about Mohamed to say what I think of him. Now that we had a foundation of honesty, things carried on from there. But they didn’t carry on as I would have expected. If you told me as an Adventist Christian that you didn’t know enough about Jesus to say who He was, I would start right into a Bible study. Instead of educating me about Mohamed, though, they kept asking me more questions about what I did know and believe. This was probably the greatest experience of my life.

There are many issues on which Islam and Christianity differ, and if you are seeking to build walls, you can find plenty of foundations for them. But there are also many issues for which our religions share beliefs, and especially many issues where the Qur’an and the Bible are similar. It was as if the Holy Spirit was guiding them in asking the questions because in every case they asked a “bridge” question instead of a “wall” question. I must confess that I didn’t expect this meeting to happen and I wasn’t prepared. But I also must confess that I serve a very mighty and awesome God, and I did pray that he’d make me a witness that day. For every question asked, the Holy Spirit gave me an answer and after about 45 minutes, the Imam announced that it was time to go, but before departing he said something to me.

He said, “Allah accepts your prayers. You can meet with us any time.”

I hope and pray God gives me the opportunity to tell this Imam how right he was. You see, I’ve come to learn that this statement means that I’m “in” and they consider me one of them as far as meeting and praying together. I’d prayed that God would make me a witness, and then the Imam told me that I am welcome in their midst. God is good, isn’t He? Now this is only the start of the mission story. Since that day, my brother and I have been continuing our meetings. Some days we talk about ordinary things like football or family, and other days we talk about spiritual things. The important thing is that we have a regular fellowship of friends in this mosque and as the Lord leads, we are sharing our witness with them and leading them toward a saving relationship with Isa ibn Mariam, and one day when the Spirit convicts them, they will accept that He (Jesus) is so much more than only a prophet.

*The names of the people and locations in this article have been changed or omitted for the purpose of confidentiality and protection.
School by the Sea (SBS) is an English language school in Poland that operates out of three locations. One of the three locations of SBS is in Kartuzy, the capital of the northern highlanders, the Cashubians, who are known for their work ethic, their spirit of enterprise and their fierce loyalty to the Roman Catholic Church. Because of their staunch religious views, Cashubians often distrust people who do not believe the same way they do. You can see and feel this distrust from them. We may teach English in Kartuzy, but first and foremost, we see this place and its people as our mission field.

Neither Adventists nor any other Protestant denomination has ever been present in Kartuzy. That is why the ceremony we had two months ago was so wonderful; it was the first ever Adventist baptism in town!

Mary, 58, came to us a year ago because she wanted to quit smoking. We did not help her to succeed; it was God who did that. First, He healed her emotionally, then physically. Next, He brought her to Himself and, finally, He took her addiction away. After this happened, she took up Bible classes. It was a very spectacular and breathtaking process to witness! Absolutely amazing! We desire to see more of it.

Mary is our joy, our encouragement and our hope that there are more people here in Kartuzy who are ready to accept Christ. Although she is young as far as church is concerned, she is already a mature missionary who is working in her own environment.

We are continuing to meet new people as we spread books and MP3 sermons around Kartuzy. And more people, besides Mary, are responding.

Maciej Strzyzewski is a vice-director of School by the Sea, a language school in Poland. For four years now, he has been running a branch of the school in the city of Kartuzy. If you are interested in serving as a volunteer at School by the Sea, please contact your Sending Division Volunteer Coordinator for more information.
As I write this, the weather in Moscow, Russia, is completely miserable. The temperature currently ranges between about 1 and 7 degrees Celsius (between 34 and 44 degrees Fahrenheit), and it has been raining on and off for the past week. Very few people ever list the weather as a reason they wish to visit Russia. Yet, every person I have met who has ever been to Moscow is fascinated by this place and develops a connection to life here. I am one of those people.

I first came to Russia in 2002 as a naïve, inexperienced 19-year-old, embarking on my first overseas adventure. I was in the midst of a “what do I do with my life” crisis related to my university studies, and I had decided that a break would be good, and that it would be more interesting to spend that break volunteering in a foreign country than serving fries at a local fast food restaurant.

When I came, I had absolutely no idea what to expect. I am somewhat embarrassed to admit that my knowledge of the world’s largest country was more or less limited to its classical music history, matryoshki (stacking dolls), snow and Communist history. Based on narrow-viewed media reports, well-meaning friends had worried my mother that I would freeze or starve to death. Over the 18 months I spent here, in which I suffered from neither frostbite nor scurvy, I learned so much more about this incredible country. Russia earned a very large place in my heart, so after a few career (i.e. study) detours, when I finally graduated I decided to return to my second home.

Working as a conversational English teacher in one of the world’s largest cities does not come without challenges. I do not always enjoy getting up to teach an 8 a.m. Business English class, only to return home 20 minutes later when my student calls to say he is stuck in traffic. Explaining the nuances between “I have lived here” and “I have been living here” does not necessarily become easier after the twentieth time. Shopping is relatively simple – until the sales assistant rambles off a sentence, spoken far too quickly and with unfamiliar vocabulary for my limited Russian comprehension. But, some of these challenges do result in great joy.

I love my assignment. Teaching is a passion of mine, and while I actually like grammar, my enthusiasm is mostly
inspired by the people who walk into my classroom. While studying a new language, my students begin to share with me. I learn about their interests, their personalities, and their lives. They come from all different walks of life, but are united in this learning place, and very often leave as friends – with each other and with me.

I also love my church. Church culture here is far more conservative than what I was accustomed to at home, but the love and acceptance shared by my church family frequently serves as a demonstration of God’s unconditional love. Their generosity, service and passion for the Gospel remind me that every follower of God is a “missionary,” not just those officially designated as such by the church.

If you analyze what I just wrote, I set up my duties and my church as challenges I face in my life here. Why? Because, regardless of your ethical stance, human cloning is not yet possible. Or, as Jesus more aptly put it, “The harvest is ripe but the workers are few” (Luke 10:2). There are currently not enough people moving across the world and living the Great Commission here in the former Soviet Union. Without more volunteers, we are limited in how many students we can connect with and share Jesus with. We need more people with whom to brainstorm about ways of making
a positive impact in the life of a Friday night Bible study attendee who has been dealt such a tough hand in life that he cannot comprehend that God actually cares about him. We need more people to demonstrate that what we left in our home countries and what we have sacrificed to come here is insignificant compared to what Jesus left behind and what He sacrificed when He travelled across the universe two thousand years ago.

There are many incredible things to do and see here in Moscow. The “once in a lifetime” experience of visiting Red Square and the Kremlin can become an everyday occurrence if you wish. World-class music and arts are readily available and accessible. Yet that is not why I, and many like me, feel connected to this country. It comes down to the people. I can endure many months of snow because of the warmth of my friends’ smiles. I can survive the sardine-like conditions of public transport during peak hour because on Sabbath morning, I will get hugs from my friends. I feel love and acceptance not because of anything I do or accomplish, but simply because I came to share my life here. When a Russian person opens his or her heart to you, it is a bit like heaven when you have a relationship with Jesus – you are going to live there forever!

Andrea Bernoth, a native of Australia, will be serving in Russia until February 2010.

Left: Andrea (center front) with some students enjoying the summer weather
Above: Red Square is fairly crowded on one of Russia’s biggest holidays
When I was a young child, I always enjoyed reading the little brochures from ADRA that lay on the table in the entrance of our church in Rosenheim, Bavaria, Germany. They told stories about young people who, in my opinion, were very brave for leaving everything—their whole lives—behind to serve in a foreign country for a year. The pictures of these young people working, helping children with their homework, digging wells, building houses, and so on, were very inspiring to me. And all the different countries they went to! Chad, Argentina, Mexico… I was fascinated.

As I grew older, the fascination grew and developed into a heartfelt wish to do the same. I wanted to be one of those young people I admired so much for their trust in God and their willingness to help others. So, one day I made the decision to apply for volunteer service. I was extremely nervous about it. Although I wasn’t really expecting to be accepted for a position, I said to myself that I should at least give it a try. However, I reigned in my expectations so I wouldn’t be too disappointed if I didn’t get picked.

As you have probably guessed by now, I did get picked. The day I received the call that I was accepted for a position, I couldn’t believe it! I was going to spend a year working as an English teacher at a language institute in Sonora, Mexico. There were six of us going; two girls went to serve with me at the Instituto de Idiomas (the language institute) and the other three (two young men and another young lady) went to serve at a nearby orphanage.

My companions were Veronika, Evelina, Renate, Janek and Kim. Five names I will certainly never forget!

Today is April 30, 2009, and I have been in Mexico for over eight months now. I give English classes Monday through Thursday, starting at 8 o’clock in the morning and usually ending at 6 o’clock in the evening. Now, I finally feel relatively comfortable as a teacher. And although this hasn’t been the most difficult year of my life, I can truthfully say it has been the most challenging. I am very shy by nature and at first, standing in front of a class full of students who were depending on me to teach them was the last thing I thought myself capable of. It was definitely a struggle trying to learn the language, growing accustomed to having to be an authority figure and a role model while I still felt like a child myself, getting used to the inevitable setbacks that go with the job of being a teacher, learning to be strict
Sarah with two of her elementary students
when you want to overlook and forgive and learning to be forgiving when you feel like being resentful.

The work here is definitely not easy; I have—reluctantly, I admit—had to learn to put all of my energy into it. But in the end, the benefit of this experience outweighs everything else. I have had my times of doubt, of course, as to where this was leading me and every so often, I felt like I shouldn’t be here—that I needed to go home. It is through my weakness, however, that God shows me His true strength. He has showed me that I do not need endless hope, patience or strength. He has those things for me. And if I ask it of Him, He will generously give me what I need. And He has. The most difficult lesson for me to learn through all of this was, and still is, putting all my faith into Him. I tend to get worked up over things very easily, but this year has taught me—God has taught me—trust and peace of mind. I am grateful for the lessons God teaches me everyday, for the friends I have here to support me and for having received the gift of this experience. I am also grateful for the times I fall, for that gives God the chance to pick me up again.

Sarah Scott, who is from Germany, ended her year of volunteer service in August of 2009. Currently, she is studying in Munich, Germany, to become a translator and interpreter. She thoroughly enjoyed volunteer service and says that, if possible, she would love to volunteer again in the future.

“For me,” says Sarah, “as well as for those who served with me, volunteer service was a huge eye-opener. It changed the way we perceive the world and our relationship to God and each other. Not all our experiences were positive, of course, but even the negative ones held valuable lessons for us.”
Two months already and nothing!? Lord, where do You want us to go? What do You want us to do?”

For ten years, my husband and I had been the epitome of Laodicea. Sure, we went to church every week. I even led Sabbath School and Vacation Bible School and Jim was an unofficial elder. Together, we had served as missionaries in the Korea Seventh-day Adventist Language Institute. Yet, we were perfect Laodiceans.

I say perfect because we sure thought we were okay spiritually, and no one would ever have suspected us of being lukewarm. Growing up Seventh-day Adventist, we had learned to “talk the talk and walk the walk”… apparently all without ever having opened a Bible—outside of public worship, of course.

And pray to our best friend? How do you talk to someone you barely know? We only prayed when we needed something. That’s how we thought it was supposed to be.

Then, through a series of negative events in our lives, God began to wake us up. The Bible says that God chastens those He loves. Sometimes He lets us hit rock bottom so we start to look up. For us, God let us lose our spiritual crutch.

You see, my father-in-law was a pastor. Why bother searching for the truth when we could just turn to our walking concordance for all the answers? When he died of leukemia, I was only beginning to understand how far we were from God.

I began to read my Bible and pray for a change in our lives. Slowly, God began to do miraculous things. To even begin to describe it all here would take more words than you’d have time to read. Suffice it to say, a few years later we finally made a full surrender and heeded God’s gospel commission. In a leap of faith, my husband quit his job and we sold most of our possessions.

He headed off to the Amazing Facts Bible College for Evangelism while I continued to home school our kids. But walking away from our beautiful home and lucrative livelihood wasn’t the biggest challenge or the hardest decision awaiting us. It was what to do next that really tested our faith.

Jim graduated from the evangelism college in December and we began to look for a place to go. After paying for college and living without an income for more than four months, our savings was gone. Jim couldn’t get a job as a Bible
worker because the churches were too timid to pay him so meagerly when he had a family to support. We had limited choices. We could return to the life we had left, but we knew that was not God’s will. We could do colporteuring. There was not much money in that, though. Then again, the decision was not about money. Speaking of which, we could go back to the mission field.

We had tried to serve through another organization without success; after a year of waiting and filling out papers, we had gotten a call from them saying they needed the forms, which we had done twelve months earlier. Somehow they had lost our information. We decided God must be saying no to that route.

We looked into going back to Korea, but now that we had a third child, they couldn’t house our family. So, we called the Adventist Volunteer Service and said we were willing to go anywhere. We got a call some time later asking if Jim would be interested in serving as an accountant for a mission school. Although we didn’t want to send him back into his former profession, we were unwilling to say no to anything God might ask at this point. It would be up to God to shut the wrong doors and open the right ones.

Nothing. Jim sold Magabooks and, just struggling to survive, we lived with my brother.

Then we had an idea. We should play to our strengths. With our past experience and training, between the two of us, we figured we could travel to small churches and train them to do evangelistic work to reach adults and kids alike. We had a friend with an RV trailer and, if we sold our van, we could purchase the trailer and an old Suburban. Jim was already selling
Magabooks and could continue that on the side and we would live off of faith. Fine with us…if that was what God wanted. No other doors seemed to open at that time.

The way things finally came together was the most unusual of all. We had been watching for Suburbans, even on E-bay. Then Sabbath came, so we put the decision aside. God, however, did not.

When we got back from church, we discovered that the kids’ passports had arrived. Jim’s and mine were still good from our previous mission venture, but since the kids were younger and we had a new addition, they each would need one. In preparation to go to the mission field when the possibility had seemed viable, we had applied for the passports. Now, with those doors shut, it seemed a little pointless.

On Sunday, we drove to the Internet café to check E-bay and finally found the perfect Suburban. We were about to bid on it (the bidding ended that day) when Jim said, “Something just doesn’t feel right about this.”

“Then don’t do it.” The words came without hesitation, as if I didn’t say them. In my mind I was thinking, are you crazy? It had taken us weeks to find this vehicle in our price range and who knew when we might find another. Somehow, I put aside my concern, though, hoping the voice that had spoken was indeed God’s.

Later that day, we received a phone call. I couldn’t understand anything. It was just static. Whoever it was didn’t call back until about the same time the following evening. It was the “Guam Guy” (as we called him) who had asked if Jim would be an accountant for a mission school and who we hadn’t heard from in nearly a month.

“Have you ever thought of being a principal?” he asked Jim.

Jim could honestly say no to that question.
“We are having a board meeting this week and are considering several names. I just wanted to know if you’ll say yes if they decide on you.”

We had said we’d do anything. What were the chances they’d want us? Several other candidates…no chance.

“Sure.”

We figured that in the off chance they chose us, it had to be God’s will.

A few days later, our phone rang.

“They voted on you guys,” said the Guam Guy.

“You’re kidding, right?”

To think that if we had not listened to that little voice the past Sunday!

“Guess we’ll be needing the kids’ passports after all!” we said to each other.

Now, we know the Guam Guy as Grandpa Rodman* (what our kids call him), the education director of the Guam Micronesia Mission. And, as the saying goes, the rest is history. We are happily serving at the Adventist school on the island of Majuro in the Marshall Islands.

After spending three years in Majuro, Jim and Chrystal Spiva are back home in the United States. At present, they are waiting to see where the Lord will lead them next.

*After years of faithful missionary service in the Guam Micronesia Mission (GMM) Keith Rodman is now serving God in his native United States. JoAnne Lafever has taken his place as education director of GMM.
When I decided to be a volunteer, I told God I would go wherever He needed me. From the beginning, there were two options: Brazil and the island of Chuuk in Micronesia. I didn’t want to choose; I wanted God to do that, but I preferred to serve in the place that was closer to home (I am from Mexico). One morning, though, after fasting and praying, I received an email in which I felt God showing me that I should go to Chuuk to teach history.

I was not prepared to be a teacher. However, I’ve always liked kids, so I went. When I got to Chuuk… oh, wow! What a beautiful island! Everything was so green and the ocean was so blue. I had the best view of the ocean from my classroom!

Serving on Chuuk helped me to understand how a person can be happy enjoying a simple life. It also taught me how to enjoy God’s blessings, like a rain shower after a hot day, clean water, food, the way God made my food last and the feeling that I was having a feast when all I could afford was macaroni and cheese, beans or a sandwich with all the vegetables! But not only that. I had to pray every morning asking God for the wisdom, energy and patience to teach, and then, when I saw the results in the students’ attitudes after I had prayed for them…this was an experience that made me feel so happy!

Before I went to Chuuk, I had many doubts, but God took care of me. He sent me great people who surrounded me and treated me like part of their family. I knew I wanted a change in my life and I had no clue how to make the change or where to go, but God had a plan for me. He knows exactly what will make us happy. We only have to trust in Him!

One of the doubts I had was regarding my health. Ever since I was 13 years old, I’ve been sick. I have endometriosis. Because of this disease, when I was back home in Mexico, I ended up in the emergency room basically every month, saw many different doctors, had four surgeries and was always on a new treatment—all of this just to stop the symptoms, because there is apparently no cure. When God opened the doors for me to serve as a volunteer, which happened in August of 2008, this was in my prayers. It has been one year already and I haven’t had to go to the hospital at all; I also haven’t passed out from extreme pain. I don’t know if I am healed, but, praise the Lord, I finally have

By Ivette Chan
a life like any other girl! My friends and family keep asking me every month if I have had any problems and some of them even send me medicine in case I need it.

Now I am starting a new school year on Palau, another island. I want to continue serving the Lord and I know that God has already changed my life in many ways. My prayer is that my students see me and realize how happy a person can be when Jesus is in their heart!

Ivette Chan writes from the island of Palau, where she is currently serving as a High School History Teacher. Originally from Mexico, Ivette graduated with her Bachelor’s degree in International Business in 2005. Before her first volunteer assignment on Chuuk, she worked in a produce business, exporting fruits and vegetables from Mexico to the United States. She is enjoying her volunteer service on Palau, and, if it is God’s will, she would like to volunteer there for one more year.

Ivette says that serving the Lord in the islands has been such a blessing in her life that she wanted to make a new commitment to God. So, she was rebaptized on October 17, 2009, at Palau Seventh-day Adventist Church. “Once I became a volunteer,” says Ivette, “God brought happiness to my life that I was never able to find by myself. Yes, there are some bad times, but in the end we know that God is in control of everything, and He always gives us the strength that we need.”
A Volunteer Interview

Heather Bohlender, a native of Colorado, United States of America, spent the 2007-2008 school year teaching English at Cambodia Adventist School in Phnom Penh, Cambodia. The experience was so challenging and wonderful that she decided to write a book about it. Her book, *Honestly, I’m Struggling*, is due out from Review & Herald Publishing Company in July 2010. As Heather puts it, the book, which is a young adult devotional, “is about my volunteer experiences overseas in Cambodia—rough, painful, educational and everything in between.” When we asked Heather to tell us about her experience in more detail, she was happy to oblige.

**Mission Post (MP):** Why did you decide to volunteer? Why in Cambodia?

**Heather Bohlender (HB):** I’ve always been really interested in missions and in giving a year to God. I wanted to go someplace different. I really just spun the globe and considered options that weren’t beautiful vacation spots. Cambodia was the one that worked out, so I went to Phnom Penh.

**MP:** What kind of volunteer work did you do? What was your typical day like?

**HB:** I taught mostly high school classes like English, Bible, Geography, and whatever else they needed. I rode my bike to school each day at 6:30 am. I taught in thatched buildings with fans that worked only if they had electricity that day, regardless of the 95 degree Fahrenheit temperatures (35 degrees Celsius). Our desks were falling apart. Not everyone had books. I had worship with my 8th graders in the morning and then taught any collection of classes to high school kids who I couldn’t always communicate with because of the language barrier. The heat was extreme, as were the dust flies. We usually sweated our way through class as I yelled over the construction going on next door. School got out every day at 3 p.m., but the kids didn’t want to go home because there was nothing good to return to.

**MP:** How do you feel God blessed your service?
HB: I cannot actually account for the first four months I was in Cambodia. I know that I made it through them, but I don’t remember those days of school, what I taught or what my conversations were. I remember praying to God each morning that I didn’t have enough strength and that He would have to carry me through. He did. Somehow I always managed. But while I was teaching, all I was really thinking was, “How can I possibly survive a year here?”

MP: What did you love most about your year of service in Cambodia?

HB: My favorite part about what I did in Cambodia was the relationships I formed with my students. School would not have been worth it if I didn’t have those certain students who taught me more about life than I ever could’ve expected. They blessed me. They carried me through.

MP: What was the biggest challenge you faced volunteering?

HB: How can I pick one biggest challenge? Loneliness and depression often left me desolate and exhausted. Adjusting to the culture was a regular battle. The biggest challenge, I suppose, was adjustment. Adjusting to being alone with no one but God, adjusting to facing my sins and adjusting to never feeling at home.

MP: How has this experience changed your life?

HB: This experience has taught me that America is just another country on the globe. It seems we (Americans) need God more than the people I met in Cambodia. We think we have all we need, so we take God for granted. This has taught me that God has made me strong. Stronger than I’ve ever had to be. This experience has taught me about suffering and pain. It has taught me that people don’t want another god of empty promises. When the people need rice, give them rice, then they will talk of God, but in the midst of suffering, we all just want some relief.

MP: What would you say to encourage other volunteers?

HB: If you wake up day in and day out in the same painful reality, praise God! If you still do your work because you made a promise to God that you would, praise God! If you are alive and breathing, praise God! If you came, you served and you learned a few things along the way, praise God! Don’t forget that what you are doing is important and that it takes a very strong person to do it. Just leaving home and putting your existence on hold is painful, difficult and isolating. But you are still doing it, praise God!

MP: Anything else you’d like to share?

HB: If you are considering serving as a volunteer, it is going to hurt. If you tell God to take control of your life, you better mean it and you better be prepared for Him to lead you into very difficult times. If you tell God to use you, don’t be surprised when He does and don’t be picky about how He does it! Get ready for wherever He may take you! 😊
Appel, Adjimul, Terry-Ann Camoy—English/Religion Teacher, from USA to Korea
Albert Rozario, James Bernard—Community Worker, from Spain to Ecuador
Albert Rozario, Pablo Juan—Community Worker, from Spain to Ecuador
Alicea, Pedro J—English/Religion Teacher, from USA to Korea
Allen, Matthew Louis-Wayne—English/Religion Teacher, from Canada to Korea
Alvarez, Elisa Victoria—Primary English Teacher, from UK to Spain
Bargblor, Nayisha Wrehley—English/Religion Teacher, from USA to Korea
Baroo, Suranjan Kumar—English Teacher, from USA to Indonesia
Batulaya, Gershon Balbar—Dentist, from Philippines to Ghana
Bennett, Almahim Johannes—English/Religion Teacher, from USA to Korea
Benton, Zachary Alexander McFarland—ADRA Asst, from USA to Argentina
Brown, Angela Lynn—ESL Teacher and Translator, from USA to Brazil
Buttrick, Janna Marie—Nurse’s Aide, from USA to Chad
Camargo, Aline Silva—Evangelist, from Brazil to Cape Verde
Carey, Brian David—ESL Teacher, from USA to Thailand
Castillo, Erin Sharee—English/Religion Teacher, from USA to Korea
Chable, Aljafet Jezreel—Personal Ministries, from Mexico to Brazil
Chaves, João Gabriel de Oliveira—Evangelist, from Brazil to Cape Verde
Chinizas, Roxana—ESL Teacher, from USA to Poland
Choi, Miessoo—English/Religion Teacher, from USA to Korea
Christensen, Jenni Marie—High School Math Teacher, from USA to Taiwan
Collett, Geneviève—Asst, from Canada to France
Cowsles, Joseph Lyle—Maintenance Asst, from USA to Guam
Cuadra, Leslie Dora—English/Religion Teacher, from USA to Korea
Danie’s Cameron Joseph—Reassign as 7th Grade ESL Teacher, from USA to Delap
de Klerk, Nicole—Reassign as English/Religion Teacher, from South Africa to Korea
Du Preez, Priscilla Martha—Reassign ESL Teacher, from South Africa to Korea
Duncan, Crystal Lavern—Clinical Asst, from USA to Costa Rica
Edwards, Yvonne—English/Religion Teacher, from USA to Korea
Espeleta, Marjolynne Grace—English/Religion Teacher, from USA to Korea
Fahrbach, Donald Christian—Family Medicine Physician, from USA to Guam
Fernando, Mylene Diego Maraggay—Teacher, from Philippines to Ghana
Fernando, Ronald Viesca—Gen Svcs/Maint Officer, from Philippines to Ghana
Ferreira, Mayara—Nurse, from Brazil to Ghana
Frondo, Roelyn Joyce—English/Religion Teacher, from USA to Korea
Gemmell, Erika Jean—Elementary School Teacher, from USA to Taiwan
Gemora, Kristine Victoria—Elementary School Teacher, from USA to Taiwan
Gerber, Tamar Stephanie—English Teacher/Secy, from Singapore to Rwanda
Ghiarducci, Michael Anthony—English/Religion Teacher, from USA to Korea
Goga, Nicolaé—Lecturer, from Netherlands to Ghana
Han, Jose Martin—English/Religion Teacher, from Canada to Korea
Hardware, David—Reassign as English/Religion Teacher, from USA to Korea
Harward, Sonja—Reassign as English/Religion Teacher, from USA to Korea
Harper, Mark—Secondary Science Teacher, from USA to USA
Hernandez, Kristine Abelene—Office Helper, from USA to Pohnpei
Hidalgo, Derrek Jose—Hosp Administrator, from USA to Niger
Hidalgo, Kari Michelle—Second Chance School Dir, from USA to Niger
Hislop, Alyssa Twinkie—ESL Teacher, from USA to Thailand
Holland, Lindsey Joy—Aast to Orphanage Dir, from USA to India
Horton, Geneva Yvonne—Biology Teacher, from USA to Belize
Iaburov, Ruslan Anatolyevich—Maintenance, from Ukraine to Austria
Ingold, Jennifer Raye—High School Girls’ Dean, from USA to Taiwan
Ionta, Manuela—Youth Asst, from Romania to UK
Jansen Rabello, Felipe—Science Teacher, from Brazil to Nicaragua
Jimenez, Chenosa Laraine—English/Religion Teacher, from USA to Korea
Johnson, Anika Jamelia—Reassign as Eng Lang Tchr, from Jamaica to Japan
Judson, Kellie Jae—English/Religion Teacher, from Virgin Islands to USA
Kaplon, Ewelina—Guest Administration, from Poland to Austria
Karr, Tamara Noel—HS Art-Photography-Desktop Pub Tchr, from USA to Taipei
Keft, Eric Nayden—English/Religion Teacher, from Australia to Korea
Keft, Michelle Renee—English/Religion Teacher, from Australia to Korea
Khapo, Tembela Theodora—English/Religion Tchr, from South Africa to Korea
Kilgour, Stephen Andrew—English Teacher, from Australia to Peru
Kim, Seon Jung—Golden Angels Singer, from USA to South Korea
Koss, Timothy Allen—English/Religion Teacher, from USA to Korea
La Madrid, Kristen Marie—Reassign as Eng Lang Tchr, from USA to Korea
Lake, Hadessah Lucymene Shenken—Eng Ret Tchr, from Virgin Islands to Korea
Lashley, Keith Andrea—English/Religion Teacher, from USA to Korea
LaTour, Donn Alan—Dermatologist Physician, from USA to Guam
Lavigne, Timothy Christopher—Principal, from USA to Saipan
Lichtenwalter, Ehren David—English/Religion Teacher, from USA to Korea
Lynes, Emily Jean—7th Grade Teacher, from USA to Ebebe
Madden, Hillary Blaine—Elementary Teacher, from USA to India
Malit, Kristoffer Bill Cantos—English/Religion Teacher, from Philippines to Korea
Malit, Xyryl Marie Pasco—English/Religion Teacher, from USA to Korea
Martinez, Sarai Esther—English/Religion Teacher, from USA to Korea
Massuk, Miriam Lungle—English/Religion Teacher, from South Africa to Korea
Matthews, Bobbie Jean—English/Religion Teacher, from USA to Korea
Matthews, Chris Beldon—Engineering Asst, from USA to Guam
McGregor, Kemi Anne—English/Religion Teacher, from USA to Korea
McPherson, Alyssa Danielle—4th Grade Teacher, from Canada to Chukk
Melody, Kathy—Principal, from USA to Saipan
Meyer, Aaron Robert—Elementary School Teacher, from USA to Taiwan
Monette, Michele Gabrielle—Reassign as Eng Lang/Religion Tchr, from USA to Korea
Monvalse, Carlos Andres—ESL Teacher, from USA to Brazil
Morchans, Muriel—ADRA Asst, from France to New Caledonia
Muñoz, Paulina Astrid Lorena—English/Religion Teacher, from USA to Korea
Nam, Jueehol—English/Religion Teacher, from USA to Korea
Nersess, John Laven—Emergency Medicine Physician, from USA to Guam
Nesmith, DeForest Owen—English/Religion Teacher, from USA to Korea
Nesmith, Dorothy Janet—English/Religion Teacher, from USA to Korea
Nhlapo, Gcinia Gcinuzumi Lycidas—Speaker, from South Africa to Netherlands
Nieves, Jashira—Aast to Orphanage Dir, from USA to India
Nxumalo, Sisa-Linda Kokhanya—English/Religion Teacher, from UK to Korea
O’Brien, Carm Juliana—Reassign as Religion/Religion Teacher, from USA to Korea
Owens, Nicolas Leon—Elementary School Teacher, from USA to Taiwan
Partmann, Leah—Lay Health Ministry, from USA to Thailand
Partmann, Sarah Rose—Lay Health Ministry, from USA to Thailand
Perry, Arlise Redick—English/Religion Teacher, from USA to USA
Pierson, Mark David—Construction Worker, from USA to Ethiopia
Pompeu de Souza, Kelly Lisley—Sport Activities Asst, from Brazil to Spain
Purkeypile, Eileen Neave—Evangelism with Children, from USA to Bolivia
Purkeypile, Jarrod Daniel—Evangelism with Children, from USA to Bolivia
Rhoe, Dewey D—Pharmacist, from USA to Guam
Richardson, Arielle Trinecia—English/Religion Teacher, from USA to Korea
Riffle, Andrew Marcell—Bible/English Teacher, from USA to India
Rocoro, Kyla—Teacher, from Philippines to Costa Rica
Ruff, Tahia Nairumbi—English/Religion Teacher, from USA to Korea
Saenz, Andres—Co-Med Dir, from USA to Mauritania
Saenz, Bonnie—Co-Med Dir, from USA to Mauritania
Saunders, Sara Elizabeth—English Teacher, from USA to Mexico
Saw, Dora—Registered Nurse, from USA to Guam
Saw, Eng Chuan—General Surgeon, from USA to Guam
Sawyers, Pauline Sophia—Psychologist, from USA to Brazil
Sevison, Ruth Ann—ESL Teacher, from USA to Poland
Souza, Flavio Inahara—Pastor for Portuguese Group, from Brazil to Japan
Stanley, Charles Raymond—Evangelistic Speaker, from Australia to Norway
Stewart, Elizabeth Angela—English/Religion Teacher, from Canada, to Korea
Swaine, Joseph Richard—English/Religion Teacher, from USA to Korea
Thompson, Travis John—English Language Teacher, from USA to Rwanda
Trefz, Thomas Nathaniel—Elementary School Teacher, from USA to Taiwan
Tyson, David Alexander—English/Religion Teacher, from Australia to Mongolia
Ubedo, Lowell—English/Religion Teacher, from USA to Korea
West, Lewis Earl—English/Religion Teacher, from USA to Korea
Winkle, Kati Danielle—Teacher, from USA to India
Woods, Michael James—Computer Support Specialist, from USA to Guam
Yeoobad, Samuel Garibrah—English/Religion Teacher, from USA to Korea
With deep sadness, we’d like to share with you the news that Kirsten Elisabeth Wolcott, a volunteer from the North American Division, was murdered on the island of Yap in Federated State of Micronesia on Thursday, November 19, 2009. We ask you to join us in prayer for the Wolcott family, for the Yap Seventh-day Adventist School and for the other volunteers currently serving on Yap.

Over the years, there have been others who have gone out as volunteers to serve the Lord and who have paid the ultimate price by giving their lives during their service. As we mourn for Kirsten, we also mourn for all of them. We pray that other volunteers will rise up to carry on the work in their stead. And we long for the day of Jesus’ return, when we hope to meet all of them, including Kirsten, in heaven.
Listed are samples of volunteer opportunities available at the time this issue went to press. There are currently hundreds of volunteer opportunities available throughout the world, and more become available each day! For the most current information on these and other volunteer positions, visit us online at: www.adventistvolunteers.org. If you are interested in becoming a volunteer, contact your division volunteer coordinator for more information. Your home division will process your application. To find your Division Contact from the website, click on “divisions.”