

From the G.C. President

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O ORTHODOX CORRECTION: In a September 1994 encyclical letter, dealing with marriages between Orthodox and non-Orthodox partners, the Greek Orthodox Archbishop for North and South America listed Seventh-day Adventists among those described as “non-Christians.” In response to the concern raised with the Archbishop’s office by Dr. B. B. Beach, director of the G.C. Public Affairs and Religious Liberty Department, a representative of the Archbishop sent a letter to the recipients of the first letter clarifying that Seventh-day Adventists, as Trinitarians who are baptized in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, are indeed Christians.

O BELARUS: There have been recent moves by the present government to return to more communist-era controls, symbols and atmosphere. It appears that, should this happen, the Orthodox Church would have far greater control. The Belarus Conference is worried about the possible prohibition of expatriate evangelistic campaigns. In the last 18 months or so, the latter rain has been falling on Belarus with hundreds joining the church. Please pray that God’s Spirit will soften the hearts of the country’s leaders so that religious freedom will continue.

O GLOBAL MISSION - PHILIPPINES: Global Mission is having a tremendous impact in countries where the Seventh-day Adventist Church is firmly established. A prime example is the Philippines. One out of every 13 Seventh-day Adventists in the world lives in the Philippines. Church membership in this island nation is over 620 thousand which means that, with a population of 68 million, one out of every 110 people in the country is an Adventist! Here, Spirit-filled lay people are God’s primary resource in accomplishing His mission.

Let me share a glimpse of the activities taking place in one small church district, the Northwestern Samar District in the East Visayan Mission of the Philippines. Local church elder Praxideo Bolitres of the Burabod church accepted the challenge of winning 16 people for the Lord this year. So far, 11 have been baptized. Lay people of the Capul and Linungsuran churches have led two to the Lord and are conducting a large baptismal class. Brothers Sanoria, Cabacang, and Penaflor gave Bible studies to prisoners in the Provincial jail of Allen resulting in 14 inmates being baptized. Women organized a Global Mission initiative in San Juan, San Isidro, and 18 people were brought into the Church. Ghunie and Phoebe Abesta organized a singing group to complement their Global Mission evangelism outreach in San Juan.

Three have been baptized, and two others are being prepared for baptism. The report from this one district goes on and on, filled with various lay-initiated soul-winning programs. This may sound like a conference-wide report, but it is not. It represents one pastor, one district, one vision, but with hundreds of active lay-people being led by one Spirit.

O NAKHICHEVAN (meaning “Noah was here”—an enclave of Azerbaijan), a Muslim autonomous republic located between Armenia, Turkey, and Iran, is accessible only by airplane. A country of extremes, the temperature in the winter plummets to -35°C and in the summer climbs to a scorching $+35^{\circ}\text{C}$. Due to the war with Armenia, it has been deprived of natural gas, electricity, and water for months.

In a report I recently received from Adventist Development and Relief Agency workers Wagner and Gisele Kuhn, who have served there for the last year, they told me how each time they saw Mount Ararat they prayed “God, if You could move and change these mountains, we know You can do miracles among these Muslim people.” Recently Wagner, during a trip to Ordubad, talked to a lady he recognized. Through an Azeri translator, he asked about her family. The lady unfolded her story. Her husband Usif Mamedov, is handicapped because of the war and receives a monthly pension of only 10,000 Manats (US\$2) which buys less than 1kg of meat. They had nine children, but two died. When Wagner probed, she told how her two sons (3 months-old and 3 years-old) died of hunger but she, her husband and, seven daughters survived. She was so thankful to ADRA because if it were not for the ADRA food, she said, the entire family would have died.

For months the Kuhns worshiped at their home with the only other member in the country, until one day Tamila appeared at the ADRA office. She said she knew they were worshiping on Sabbaths (maybe she heard the hymns!) and wanted to attend. The Kuhns were thrilled. Then, every Sabbath, Tamila brought someone new to the worship service, and the attendance grew. Due to her witnessing, 25 now attend Sabbath worship services. They are so eager to learn about Jesus and the plan of Salvation. Two recently prayed for the first time in their lives. They hope to buy Bibles (which cost US\$1 each), hymnals and religious literature for these people. Please, pray for the people of Nakhichevan. Truly ADRA provides Global Mission opportunities.