

# mission post

From Everywhere to Everywhere

volume 15 • number 1



*What? Change?!*



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I still don't understand all of the ways in which God works and the reasons for why He says yes at some points and no at others. But I do know that God has a better plan for our lives than we can imagine!

**Cover:** Phuket, Thailand. Story on page 10.

# missionpost

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# P o s t c a r d

*Dear Friends,*

**M**y name is Svitlana, and I have had the privilege to volunteer at the Instituto Adventista Paranaense (IAP), or Parana Adventist Academy, in the South Brazil Union Conference. The academy is located among the rolling hills of Southern Brazil, offering views that I find comfortingly similar to both Ukraine and England (the two countries I know and love the most).

Teaching English has been an important part of my role here, though it's not all that I do. At IAP, each volunteer is encouraged to develop a more individualized work program, depending on personal preference and background experience. As such, I have participated in an ongoing social work project with orphanage children, taught violin lessons, and of course, traveled! Seeing stunning landscapes, meeting new people, and learning the language have been unforgettable, and I am grateful for the opportunities to have fun as well as to work hard!

In short, mine has been a truly rich experience of giving, sharing, and receiving. It has been well worth the time, effort, and home-sickness, because somewhere in the middle of it, you realize that what you are taking away

is a deeper experience with God, a better understanding of your strengths, a humble willingness to continue using them, and a whole lot of new friends!

My hope is that you can experience something similarly rewarding, too. 🙏

In Christ,  
Svitlana



**Top:** Svitlana (middle) with some of her English students  
**Bottom:** Orphanage project activities



# R e f l e c t i o n s

**“A candle loses nothing**



**by lighting another candle.”**



John Thomas | Editor, Mission Post | Associate Secretary, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists® | Director, Adventist Volunteer Service

## What? Change?!

One of the things we can be sure about in this life is that nothing stays the same forever. Change comes planned or unplanned! In the case of *Mission Post* magazine, the change is planned. For months, we (GC Secretariat, Archives, Statistics and Research, Adventist Mission, Institute of World Missions and AVS) have been talking about the need to have a magazine that tells mission stories, so we are going to combine resources and talents and produce a new magazine called *Mission 360°*. This will be a quarterly magazine (paper and electronic) with a much wider circulation than any one magazine. It will cover a very broad scope implied in the term "Missionary."

For the past ten and a half years, the GC AVS office has published 44 *Mission Post* magazines which have been mailed out to those requesting it and to specific offices around the world. It is also available online. This has served us well and we are proud of the willing contributors and all those involved in getting the magazine published. Now these efforts will be transferred to the new magazine, which will include stories from all kinds of missionaries.

The intent of the new magazine is to tell of mission experiences, both old and current. We will include some historical items – stories from "old" missionaries from years past – as well as stories from currently serving full-time missionaries and volunteers. We also want to hear about the experiences of those serving on short-term mission trips. The "Mission" story can still be told and we want to share it with as many people as possible. By your involvement in mission, Jesus is working through your caring hands, feet and voice telling the story of His service to the world.

Here is where you come in! We want your stories and we want you to encourage other volunteers/missionaries to send us stories of their experiences as well. We want to hear why you chose to serve and what you did. We want to know how you were able to adjust to a new place and culture. What worked? What didn't? How did it change your spiritual journey? Finally, how did you adjust to returning home? Help others to live your experiences as a volunteer/missionary by sharing your stories and photos.

As we say goodbye to *Mission Post* and those who worked hard to produce it, we want to celebrate the birth of

*Mission 360°*, and look forward to spreading your varied mission experiences to the whole world. In Matthew 28, Jesus says, “Go,” and you went! Now we want to tell your story.\* 🌐

\*Send your articles to [AVSpublications@gc.adventist.org](mailto:AVSpublications@gc.adventist.org), or follow the link on the AVS website: [www.adventistvolunteers.org](http://www.adventistvolunteers.org)



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Mexico

# God Opens Doors

By Anne Gauer



**I**n the year 2007, God gave me the great opportunity to go to Mexico with ADRA Germany. I was able to serve in the Institute of Languages at the University of Navojoa. When I first heard of the opportunity, I was a bit afraid because it was such a big step for me. I would be going to another continent, learning a new language, and becoming acquainted with a new and different culture. It was nerve-wracking!

However, what made me decide to accept the opportunity was the fact that God was on my side. God is always on our side, and realizing that helped my faith grow stronger. I also realized that Seventh-day Adventists are like a big family all over the world, and that encouraged me to be ready to meet and make new friends. I prayed about it for a long time. I also

spoke with other volunteers about their experiences, and after hearing them, I felt my courage return. It was clear that God had opened this door, so I went!

I had such a wonderful time in Mexico! I had so many great experiences and I saw God's blessings daily while I was there. The University of Navojoa has a very peaceful atmosphere. I served as an ESL teacher, and I felt so privileged to be a part of the campus activities. In my teaching, I used Bible stories and other religious materials in my work. I loved my work a lot. My favorite part was teaching English to non-Adventists. I would answer

their questions, and sometimes, I would have the joy of seeing some of them attend our church! At the university, I met so many people that were serving God in small and big, but equally wonderful ways. It was so encouraging to see how these people lived and how strong their faith was. They taught me so much. Through them, I learned to trust in God no matter

what happens. God has complete control of my life.

The Bible says that God's ways and thoughts are higher than ours. What I



Anne with the other ADRA volunteers

hadn't even anticipated was that God would open the door to Mexico again after I had finished my last exams in Germany. I was able to go back to the University of Navojoa and work there for two more years. I was so happy! At the university, I would be able to use all the gifts God gave me to help and serve other people. I would be able to teach English again, and share Christ with others. I knew that I would have so many more wonderful experiences with Jesus. What an amazing God we serve! 🙏



Anne with her friends from Mexico

**Anne Gauer** is originally from the north of Germany. She lives on a little island named Poel in the Baltic Sea. Anne served as an ESL Teacher at the University of Navojoa in Mexico. She served from August of 2007 through February of 2009. She returned to work at the University again after she finished her education. Anne desires to inspire young people for Jesus and the Adventist message. She feels that she has had so many positive experiences with Jesus that she just has to share them with others and encourage people to let Jesus be their Teacher and Guide through life.



Anne and the other teachers



Anne teaching a class



# God Won't Forget

By Citrina Warren

After I graduated from college, I felt down. I felt that all my hard work wasn't going towards what I really wanted. I had a strong desire to work and travel. I couldn't understand why I was living in a time where it was hard to find a job and to meet the requirements of the job. Going to church didn't ease my low spirits and I felt as though God wasn't hearing my prayers.

One night, I was surfing the internet, and came across a movie trailer that I happened to watch. As I was watching it, I saw that I could really relate to what the main character was feeling. She wanted fulfillment in her life and purpose in her journey, just like I did. Ever since I was a little girl, I had wanted to travel, meet new people, and experience different cultures. I felt that this was a sign that God was telling me it was time to look into opportunities that would allow me to do so.

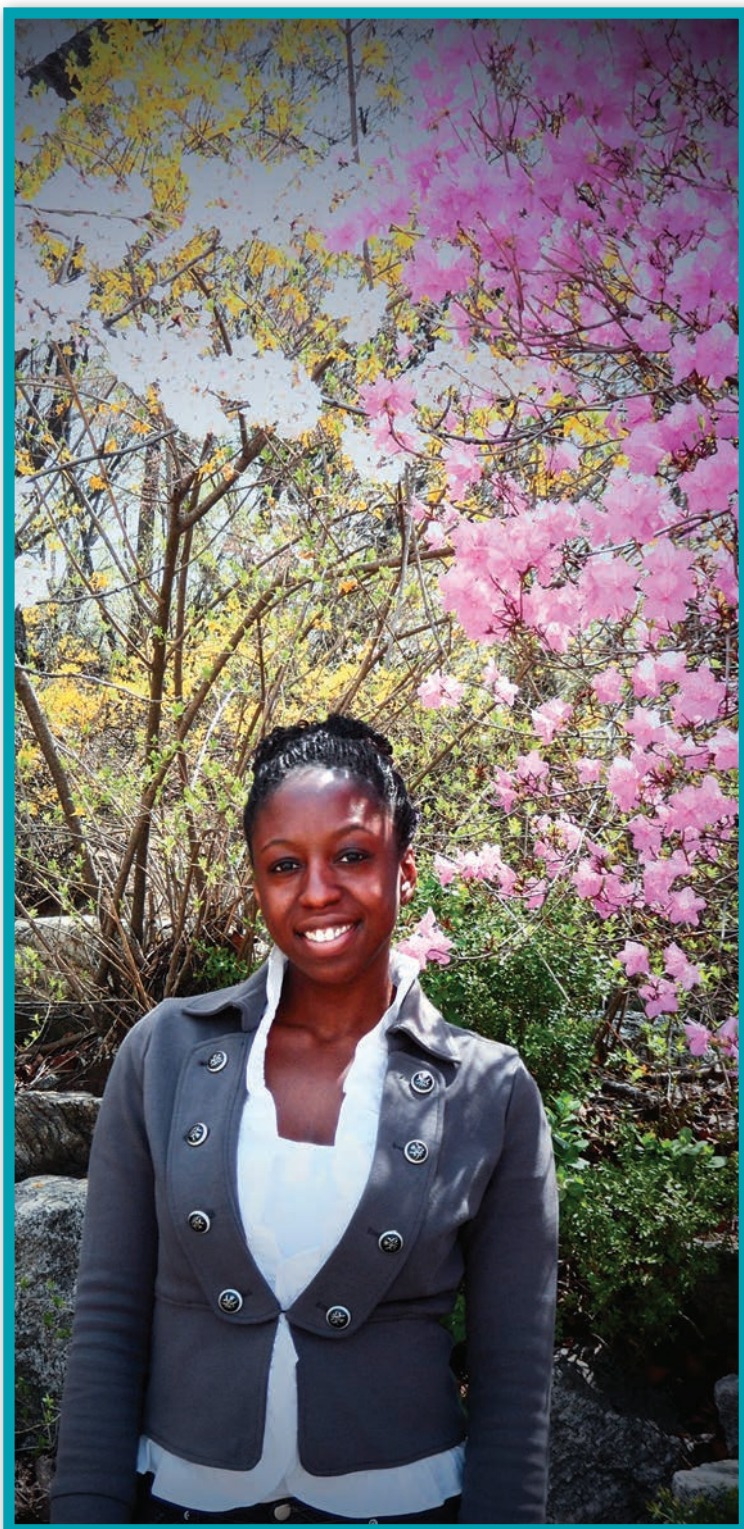
As I prayed about my situation, I had so many questions for God about where He wanted me to go. In a few days, I received my answer. A friend of mine suggested that I should consider teaching English in South Korea. I had never thought about teaching, but I decided to look into it. As I filled out the application, I said to God, "Lord, if you really want me to be in Korea, please have someone from the Language School call me tonight!" That night, the teaching coordinator called me regarding my interest in serving in Korea and gave me more information on what to do to get there.

After I hung up the phone, I was in complete shock. God had answered my prayer exactly as I had prayed it! Just to be

sure, I asked God one more thing. I said to Him, “If you really, really want me in Korea, please hold off the snow so that I can get all my required documents turned in on time!” Now why did I pray for it not to snow, of all things? Well, I live on the east coast of the United States where heavy snowstorms are normal during the months of January through February. When we get snow storms, everything shuts down. Stores are closed, the postman can’t deliver the mail, and sometimes electricity gets cut off. So I prayed that the snow would be held off until I could complete my paperwork and mail it to Korea in a timely manner. Making the deadline was important as this affected the visa process.

Amazingly, it did not snow at all, and I was able to complete everything in time. I knew that God really wanted me in Korea.

I am a firm believer that God can talk to us through any means necessary. One night, I even had a dream that I went to serve in Korea at the wrong time. I woke up the next day thinking about it. Later that day, I received a call from the Language School to come to Korea earlier than I had originally planned. I requested time to pray about it and speak to my family before making my decision. As I hung up the phone, I thought about my dream and knew that God wanted me to be in Korea as soon as possible. Finally, in March 2011, I arrived in Korea!





Phuket, Thailand

During my time there, I was able to witness to my students about Christ and show them that being a Christian is a lifestyle. In Korean culture, the use of alcohol is widespread; it's seen as the only way to have fun and socialize with your friends and colleagues. I was able to show my students that they could have fun without alcohol. That was just one of the ways in which I was blessed to be used by God. I soon realized that this year that I was serving to spread the gospel had also brought me into a closer relationship with God.

Living abroad was just one of my dreams that came true. I was able to see Usain Bolt (my favorite athlete) compete for the World Championship Games in Daegu, Korea. I was also able to visit my dream destination for Christmas - Phuket, Thailand. When I went to serve in Korea, the Lord brought to pass everything else that I had dreamed about and worked and prayed for.

When it comes to God, timing is everything! We live in a microwave society where we want everything here and now, but it doesn't work that way with God! He has a scheduled appointment with you and you will never walk out of it dissatisfied. You have to believe that God will come through for you and claim all His promises. I'm not trying to say that God will just give us everything we want. Nor am I trying to say that He'll always answer prayers with miraculous or obvious signs. God works differently with everyone, and the method He used to teach me might not work

in someone else's situation. I am saying, however, that no matter what, God will prove Himself to you if you allow Him to! He knows best. Don't ever believe it when the devil whispers to you that God will not come through for you, or that He has forgotten you. I always refer to Isaiah 49:15-16 when I am tempted to doubt in God's providence. It says, "Can a mother forget the baby at her breast and have no compassion on the child she has borne? Though she may forget, I will not forget you! See, I have engraved you on the palms of My hands; your walls are ever before Me."\*

Do you see how important you are to God? Don't forget it, because He has not forgotten you! ●

\*Verse taken from the New International Version

**Citrina Warren** is originally from the United States. She served as an English-Religion Teacher at the SDA Language School (SDALS) in South Korea from March of 2011 through April of 2012. She then served in the Human Resources office of SDALS through September of 2012. Citrina has a passion for traveling and her biggest desire is to spread the word of God through her travels. She is excited to see where God will lead her next!



Phuket, Thailand



Summer Camp



Micronesia

# Stretching My Faith

By Pamela Simanton

To describe my volunteer experience, I would have to say it was like jumping off a cliff. I had no idea what I was getting myself into. I was in my second year of college, taking Elementary Education, and I was sure that teaching was for me. My life had been pretty normal up to that point – no huge illnesses – and I was in a stable relationship with God. But I wanted more. Looking for adventure and that “best-year-of-my-life” experience that all volunteer recruiters promised, I put my education on hold and applied to be a volunteer. My first choice was Cambodia. However, things didn’t work out, and on August 5th, 2011, I found myself on a plane to Yap, Micronesia, as the newly appointed third grade teacher. I was excited, scared, and very sure that this year would be unforgettable. I very clearly remember asking God to stretch my faith.

The first few weeks there were some of the happiest I have ever experienced. My new life was a chaos of getting settled, adjusting to the new environment (especially the heat), and trying to figure out what to teach and how to teach it. I was loving every minute. Yes, there were problems, but I had expected minor problems. The main thing was that I was enjoying teaching, my

relationship with God was growing, and I loved the people that I was working with as well as my students.

Then I got sick. I went to the hospital and was told it was just the flu. However, two weeks later, my stomach was in so much pain that it was decided I should go back to the hospital just to be safe. Hospitals in Yap are very different from hospitals in Canada. So I was a little nervous when the doctor discovered that I needed to have my appendix removed. It was too late to fly me anywhere else and it was decided that I would have surgery on the island. I remember being wheeled into the operating room, saying to myself, “This is not what I signed up for!” I was not sure my faith was strong enough to handle a surgery far away from home, without my parents. But I had no choice. Panic and nerves began to set in. Nothing this big had ever happened to me. This was not in my perfect plan for volunteer life.

My nervousness only increased when the doctors gave me a spinal tap. After four tries, I began to lose feeling from the neck down. However, the doctors were sure I should still have feeling in my arms. I didn’t; in fact, I couldn’t move any part of my body. Unfortunately, that

made it impossible for me to jump off the table and run away. The only thing left to do was pray. I was awake for the entire surgery, which allowed for several minutes of frantic praying. To say my prayer life increased during this time would be an understatement.

Recovery seemed to be going okay after that. The hospital had no air-conditioning and their definition of sanitation was a little different from mine. All the same, I seemed to be healing. Then, a week after surgery, I began to run a fever. Andrea, a fellow volunteer, walked in on me covered in a blanket and complaining of the cold. It was probably over 35 degrees Celsius (over 95 degrees Fahrenheit) at the time. Back to the hospital we went. This time the doctors really had no idea what was wrong. They put me back in my room, hooked up an IV, and watched

as my temperature slowly increased. That night was one of the worst I had ever experienced. I knew I needed to leave Yap, but I just did not see how it was possible. I did not have the money to fly to Guam and the hospital did not want to let me go. On top of that, if I did not make the flight that night, the next flight was three days away. What was I supposed to do? Praying was the only solution and it was a combined effort. From the staff, students, and church members on Yap, to my parents, friends, family, and church members at home. Not

only did they pray, but members of the church and school combined resources to help get me off the island. In fact, one very special and beloved person was willing to pay my airfare and hers so that I was insured a flight, had a companion to take care of me, and was not forced to wait till Tuesday. It was an answer to my prayers and it could not have come at a better time.

After a long and taxing flight, I found myself at the Guam Memorial Hospital. Unfortunately, the hospital is small, and the wait can sometimes take up to two days. I remember laying there and thinking, "All right God. I can't handle this any longer. I am in too much pain. You said you wouldn't give me more than I

could bear. Please get me a room." Yet again, God answered my prayers through the extraordinary efforts of individuals. The doctors who worked at the



Pamela in the Guam hospital with Andrea

Seventh-day Adventist clinic in Guam came through and got me my own room. In fact, one of the doctor's wives brought extra blankets and other such things to make me feel at home. All three of my amazing doctors checked on me frequently and always prayed with me before they left.

After undergoing many tests, the doctors concluded that I had several infections and I began a round of antibiotics which took about a week and a half. By this stage, my spirits were



pretty low. This was not the “best-year-of-my-life” experience that I had been expecting. In fact, it seemed to be turning into the worst year of my life. I clung to the promise that God would not send me more than I could bear. I pleaded with God to be reunited with my students. It was breaking my heart that I wasn’t able to teach them and that I was causing so much stress for the school. Everyone was working extra hours to cover my classes and the other duties I had. I felt extremely guilty because of that, and I just wanted to get back to my volunteer work.

This is where I really saw God stepping up through other people. First, there was Andrea, the amazing woman who accompanied me to Guam. She was a constant source of wisdom and spiritual guidance. We were able to laugh at the situation I was in and be thankful that I was not in child birth, because we were sure that had to be worse! Then there was the family who picked me up from the airport and helped us through the entire experience. We were new to Guam and they provided us with all the resources and company we needed. I was lucky enough to have several other visitors, but the biggest support of all came from a local family that was staying in the room next to mine. The man had gotten into a bad motorcycle accident and the whole family

was staying with him. His sister had seen me walking the halls and felt impressed to greet me. Here I was, the volunteer representing Christ, and she was the one

making contact with me! That was the start of a great friendship. We would spend hours watching movies and talking about everything, from God to Canada. She introduced me to the whole family, including

aunts, uncles and friends, and they took it upon themselves to make my hospital experience a lot less lonely.

Two weeks and a lot of little miracles later, I was back in Yap. But as much as I pushed myself and pleaded with God, I was not fully recovered. In fact, I seemed to be slowly getting worse again. My only goal was to teach my students, but I could barely survive half a day. Finally, instead of praying for a specific answer, I prayed for God to give me the ability to accept His will. About a week later, it was decided that I should leave Yap. It was the hardest decision of my life. But it had to be done.

The flight was long and I cried most of the way. I was so angry at God for my departure from Yap. For some reason, I believed that as soon as I accepted His will, it would coincide with mine. Unfortunately, it had not, and I was furious. I don’t remember much of what I said to Him or what the plane ride was like, but I probably scared most of



Pamela and her roommates soon after arriving in Yap

the poor passengers to death. It was during that time that I decided that I would return to Yap no matter what. I remember being wheeled into the airport and loudly proclaiming to my parents that I was going back. They probably thought I was crazy.

I spent several weeks recovering at home. Up until the day I left, I still believed that God would pull through, allowing me to recover and stay in Yap. Once home, it was an awakening to me. He had not answered my prayers. I was in rough shape, having lost at least thirty pounds, and I was tired all the time. The smell of food made me sick; my stomach caused me constant discomfort, and I had been on high levels of pain medication for almost a month. To make matters worse, people at home did not understand what I went through. It seemed that they were blaming me. It came across as if they believed that I would have been fine if my prayer life was stronger, or if I had more faith. Because of this, I vowed I was going back if I had to swim the whole way myself. I would prove to them that Yap was where God wanted me.

I was not the only one struggling either. The school in Yap seemed to have problem after problem. At first, we did not have enough

teachers, and for weeks we continued to pray and hope for more. In fact, I taught both second and third grades while we were waiting for more teachers to arrive. By the time we were fully staffed, I was sick with appendicitis. After that, several other things happened, including frequent earthquakes. When Andrea and I arrived back from Guam, Andrea got sick with Dengue fever. She ended up going home around the same time as me, placing a major amount of stress on all the volunteers left on the island. It also caused me to doubt God even more. Why would He allow both of us to leave? Didn't He care about Yap SDA School?

As the months went by, I learned a lot. I would never agree that it's okay to be angry at God. But I understand why He

says to be either hot or cold. He was able to work with my anger because it meant that I was still talking to Him. As our relationship began to heal, I felt like God was calling me back to Yap. At first, I have to admit, that it was my own stubbornness I heard. Everyone was telling me not to go back, but I was going to prove them wrong. Maybe I could finally get the volunteer experience I so desperately

craved. But then I began to truly focus on what God wanted and I felt his leading.



Spirit Week!

My anger faded; my relationship with Him grew, and as a result, I began to prepare to head back to Yap in January.

All the barriers standing in my way began to disappear with God's help. The amazing people of Walla Walla fund-raised for me, even though I was not part of their school. My parents also supported my returning. There were some medical problems that did arise. The genetic heart murmur I had always had got worse as a result of the infections received during surgery. But the doctors said I was fine to return and I knew that was a sign.

On January 15<sup>th</sup>, I was back on a plane and headed for Yap.

I was ecstatic to be back. The last three months of my life had been geared towards recovering so that I could return. I was finally able to continue my adventure. I wish I could say that my story ends here. That my dive off the cliff had ended and that I had reached flat ground. Unfortunately for me, that was not the case at all.

Four days after I arrived, Andrea, who had arrived two days earlier (after being sent home due to dengue fever), broke her foot in two places and was rushed to the hospital. That shocked me.

My rose-colored glasses were yanked off and life as a volunteer set in. Don't get me wrong – I loved being

there, but life in Yap is hard, and Andrea breaking her foot was one of the worst points of the entire year. It was as if God seemed to be forgetting our Island.

About five weeks later, I knew something was wrong. I remember running out of my class and throwing up. I sat on the ground beside the toilet and cried. I was so terrified of being sick. I believed that I could never go through that again and yet I knew there was something wrong. But instead of praying, I got up, and out of sheer stubbornness, walked back into my classroom to finish teaching. In the days that followed, I would run out to throw up at random, but I made Jesse (the second grade teacher) promise not to say anything. I was here and I was staying, if I had to tie myself to a tree.

My poor students went through a lot. I confronted them and let them know that I was feeling a little sick and that they had to be extra good. They were solemn, and then one student yelled out, "We have to be quiet, otherwise teacher will leave us for Canada again!" It broke my heart and I

promised that I would not leave. I had forgotten the lesson I had learned last time. I should have prayed that God's will would be done; instead I stopped praying all together, knowing that



Pamela the day after getting out of the hospital

His will might not be the same as mine.

As I got worse, the school stepped up

and supported me. Some days were fine, but I knew I couldn't keep up and could only teach when I felt strong enough. I was losing weight again and the doctors could not tell what the problem was. My head ached constantly and when it got unbearable I would throw up. I had a low-grade fever most of time and I was very weak. But as sick as I was, I refused to leave. I thought my heart would physically break if I gave up and left.

Doctors on the island ran some tests to see if I had an amoeba, but the results were negative. However, due to the lack of good equipment, the tests are often wrong, so I was urged to take the medication anyway. By this time, I had stopped praying altogether. I did yell at God, though, and demand to stay. I offered certain promises if He would heal me, but I did not talk to Him. I was just not content to follow His will. Finally, the North American Division officers and the president of the Guam Micronesian Mission arrived to do a tour of the new schools that had been added to their territory. After hearing what was happening, they urged me to leave Yap, so it was decided that I would go to Guam again. If I didn't get better there, I would fly home.

I don't think I can express in words how hard it was. While the decision was being made, I remember bursting into tears

several times and having to run out of the room. I felt so alone and no one was there to pray with me or even hold my hand. God did not seem to be listening and the people I looked up to the



Pamela and her grade 3 students the day before she left Yap

most were not giving me the comfort I expected. I remember sitting on the floor and weeping, when a Yapese woman approached me to ask what was wrong. I tried to explain that she should just leave, but I doubt she understood through all the weeping. She just sat down and hugged me. In that moment, I was reminded that help and love can come from unexpected places. I began to think that maybe I was not as alone as I thought.

With a little more courage, I went back to the house and talked to my roommates. I seriously had no idea how I was going to pack up, grade all my papers and make lesson plans for the next week. I only had four hours to finalize everything and come to terms with leaving Yap a second time. My roommates really came through for me and we managed to get everything done. That night, I flew to Guam.

By now, I was so depressed. I had been forced to leave Yap without even saying goodbye to my students. It broke my heart



to know that I had lied to them. All of my other good byes had been rushed, and my adopted family didn't even know that I was leaving until they arrived at the airport. I was mad at the world and convinced that God had made a huge mistake. Twice.

My second stay in Guam was short and hard. I was pretty sick and it all seems a blur now. But I do remember the Reel family. I had met them during my last hospital stay and they were great. I spent hours at their house hanging out. They reminded me that my health was my first priority and that I was not the only one who could teach my kids. They became my family and I am forever grateful to them. It may have seemed like God did not care, but the Reel's showed me that God knew what He was doing. He placed the right people in my path, ensuring that I could make it through what had seemed like my worst nightmare.

When nothing got better, I knew I had to leave. On March first, I began the journey home. The only thing worse than my first flight home was the second one. I was in a lot of pain and I began to vomit soon after the flight took off. The restroom was quite far away from where I was sitting, and to make things worse, I had a middle seat. I have never felt so guilty. The other passengers had a hard time. I would be crying one minute and

then trying to run to the bathroom the next. That made for an interesting flight that I am sure my fellow flyers will not soon forget.

Once home, I again began the stressful process of healing, complete with hospital visits and enough drawn blood to fill another human! Two



*A group of volunteers on a Sabbath hike*

weeks later, I developed a rash and began to have problems swallowing. At this point, I was allowed to stay at home and I refused point blank to go into the hospital. By then I hated hospitals with a passion. But soon, I really couldn't swallow. My neck was swollen, my tongue was twice its normal size, and I was having problems breathing. I would go through the process of trying to swallow but it only caused me a lot of pain. It scared me so much that I ran into my parents' room in tears, telling them that I really couldn't breathe. We made it to the hospital in record time. It was on that terrifying ride that I began praying again, and as soon as my father prayed with me, I felt better. The problem didn't go away, but a sense of calm surrounded me and prepared me for what was ahead.

Once there, I was taken straight into the emergency area without having to wait at all. I was placed in isolation at the back of the hospital and everyone had to gown up to see me. This was a little strange, and I felt like I was in a thriller movie, except

that I was the horrible person who spreads the virus and then dies. Not exactly the role I would have chosen! I spent the next week in the hospital. To this day, the doctors are still not sure what caused all the issues I was suffering from. They did discover that I had the Measles. They also discovered that I had Dengue fever and a peritonsillar cyst growing in the back of my throat. Popping the cyst caused the most excruciating pain I have ever felt in my life. However, it began to grow back even though I had been taking antibiotics and steroids. So I underwent surgery to remove my tonsils and cauterise my throat. The surgery would have taken place sooner, but my platelets were low due to the Dengue fever and that delayed it. It was rough and recovery was slow. I had a few complications and ended up visiting the hospital again, but three weeks later I could talk normally and my appetite and ability to eat was much better.

At present, I feel almost normal again. My relationship with God is back on track, but to be completely honest, I still have my doubts. I see pictures of others and their great volunteer experiences and I get jealous. Most of my pictures show me in various stages of sickness, in various hospitals. Not really what I want to put in a scrap book. Being a volunteer was not what I expected. In fact, it seems like it was a complete disaster. I never imagined this in my wildest dreams. But God did bless me. He answered my prayer to be stretched and to grow in faith. Through amazing people, in both Yap and Guam, I learned that no matter what happens and how fast your world seems to be plunging, God is there. He shows Himself through friends who stay with you in the hospital, force you to eat, remind you

to pray, and support you through it all. He shows Himself through families who take you in, give you advice, and make you laugh when all you feel like doing is crying. Finally, He shows Himself through experiences that seem like disasters, but have small answered prayers hidden in them. Do I still doubt? Yes. But I am moving on. My volunteer experience was not what I envisioned or what I wanted at the time, but it was what God had planned, and with time and prayer that is becoming good enough for me. 🙏

**Pamela Simanton**, originally from Canada, served as a Third Grade Teacher at the Yap SDA School from July of 2011 to October of 2011 and from January of 2012 to March of 2012. Her motivation to serve as a volunteer stemmed from her desire to grow in faith and allow God to work through her.

Though serving as a volunteer was the hardest experience she has faced, Pamela believes that her faith was stretched and that God knows best. She hopes that this article will be inspiring to those who may be going through difficult times while serving.



Pamela with Raijan, one of her students during Spirit Week



A young, new preacher was walking with an older, more seasoned preacher in the garden one day. Feeling a bit insecure about what God had for him to do, he was asking the older preacher for some advice.

The older preacher walked up to a rosebush and handed the young preacher a rosebud and told him to open it without tearing off any petals.

The young preacher looked in disbelief at the older preacher and was trying to figure out what a rosebud could possibly have to do with his wanting to know the will of God for his life and ministry. But because of his great respect for the older preacher, he proceeded to try to unfold the rose, while keeping every petal intact...

It wasn't long before he realized how impossible this was to do.

Noticing the younger preachers inability to unfold the rosebud without tearing it, the older preacher began to recite the following poem...

## Unfolding the Ro

It is only a tiny rosebud,  
A flower of God's design;  
But I cannot unfold the petals  
With these clumsy hands of mine.  
The secret of unfolding flowers  
Is not known to such as I.  
GOD opens this flower so sweetly,  
Then in my hands they die.  
If I cannot unfold a rosebud,  
This flower of God's design,  
Then how can I have the wisdom  
To unfold this life of mine?  
So I'll trust in Him for leading  
Each moment of my day.  
I will look to him for His guidance  
Each step of the pilgrim way.  
The pathway that lies before me,  
Only my Heavenly Father knows.  
I'll trust Him to unfold the moments,  
Just as He unfolds the rose.

se





Marshall  
Islands

# My Journey to the Island of Woja

By Elmer Realda

**I**t was February 13, 2008, and it was my first view of the Marshall Islands – a beautiful and breathtaking scene. That was the day I stepped on Marshallese soil. I said to myself, “Wow! This is it! At last, I’m in the mission field!”

Before I embarked on my journey, I had heard a lot about the adventures of volunteering, and I felt that it was an honor to be able to serve on Woja. Joy and excitement burned inside me as I checked the ship schedule to find a passage across from the Philippines. It didn’t take too long to secure everything for me and my fellow volunteers.

I met my first challenge the day I boarded the ship. We were in the middle of the Pacific Ocean for three days and two nights, under the heavy pressure of a strong wind and huge waves. It really was a tough journey for me. On the very first day, I got seasick. The boat was overcrowded – not really designed for the number of passengers that were on it. On the second day of our voyage, the place where our supplies were located was flooded – with oil! There was some stored oil that had overflowed and most of our things were soaked. The trip was challenging, but it was a good test of our faith and

volunteer spirit, and despite everything that happened, the journey continued.

On the third day of our trip, we arrived. The people of the island welcomed us warmly and they were very happy to see us. I could see their smiles all along the way, as we headed to the SDA compound. There’s a SDA school on the island with three classrooms and one apartment for the volunteer teacher. However, the school had been closed for many years because a teacher couldn’t be found. When I reached the school, one of the locals approached me and said, “We’ve been waiting for you volunteers!” By God’s grace, we were able to open the school again with the help and commitment of one of the volunteer teachers. There was so much joy on the faces of the locals when they heard the good news.

We also had many Bible students on Woja. Some accepted Jesus Christ as their Savior and were baptized. I was able to be a part of it and see the transformation that took place in their lives. I watched them respond to our health message and quit smoking and drinking; I watched them change physically for the better. Many came to understand the gospel message and believe in God. The only challenge then was the fact that there

was no church building. I learned that the local people counted this as an identity marker, which would give them a sense of ownership. Several wouldn't commit to baptism because there was no established church. I was asked many times if we were going to build a church there. It is still a prayer and a dream of mine to have a church there someday. That way, those that are now observing the Sabbath can commit to baptism and become members of the SDA Church!

I was on the island of Woja for almost three years, and it is a privilege that I was able to share the love of Jesus with the local people. I got to share so many experiences with them. I was also able to share my limited knowledge of cooking, agriculture, and handicrafts. I am elated to think that, in small ways, God has used me to bring happiness to them. I learned a lot. I learned how to appreciate the simple things in life. The people of Woja are evidence that the best things in life can't be bought with money. I can still see their smiles of gratitude for all the little, simple things. Now that I'm back in the Philippines, I feel that a part of me is still back on the island. I think I may have left the island, but the island didn't leave me! I'm looking forward to serving as a volunteer again in the future. I will be forever thankful to the Lord for allowing me to be a part of His ministry on Woja. 🌊

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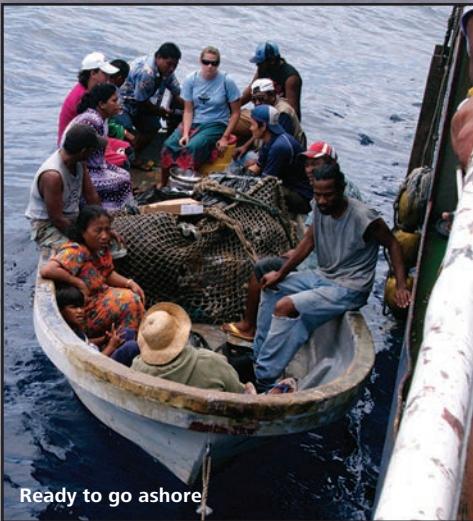
**Elmer Realda**, originally from the Philippines, served as a Bible Worker on the island of Woja in the Guam Micronesia Mission. He served from February of 2008 through December of 2011. Elmer hopes that by sharing his experiences, he will inspire others to serve as well, and he is eager to continue serving God as a volunteer again in the near future.



Elmer's second day on the ship



Leaving the ship by net



Ready to go ashore



Our mission school with 3 rooms





Micronesia



# God's Perspective

By Naveed Frank

I came to know about the Adventist Volunteer Service when I first started working in our Union office as an accountant. When I discovered AVS, I saw that there were hundreds of opportunities to serve God in other places around the world. In time, I completed an application and was eventually accepted to serve as a teacher on the island of Yap. However, several things happened that made it impossible for me to serve in Yap. I am still not sure why things didn't work out, and at the time, I was very discouraged. Most discouraging to me was the fact that I wasn't able to raise any funds or even enough for just my airfare. I thought that I had lost the chance of a lifetime. I tried to apply to other places, but my application was denied each time. I became more and more discouraged. I couldn't understand why God wasn't interested in helping me serve Him as a volunteer. I kept questioning why and complaining about the hurdles in my way. I kept thinking about things from a human perspective. I decided to stop applying for positions and concentrate on my career instead. It worked for a time, but something – a small voice – kept telling me to try AVS one more time.

This time, I applied to serve on the island of Palau, and I was successful! I could clearly see God working everything out for me. He made everything fall into place and provided all the funds I needed. I saw so much of God's goodness as he provided help through people and events. I started to understand that God's perspective is completely different from mine. I still really don't understand all of the ways in which God works and the reasons for why He says yes at some points and no at others. But I do know that God has a better plan for our lives than we can imagine! He uses different ways to teach, guide, and protect His beloved children. I don't know what the situation on Yap was then, or is now, but I know that God didn't mean for me to serve Him there and that's all the reason I need. Instead, He allowed me to come to Palau, where He had a place reserved for me, and I am so happy to be serving Him here now!

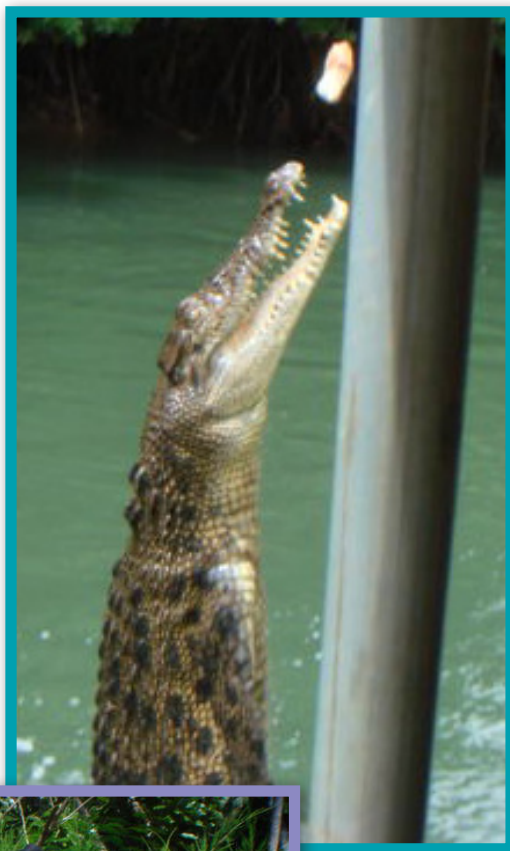
The story of Joseph is a really good example of God's perspective versus human perspective. His ten older brothers sold him into slavery in Egypt and he went through many difficulties while there, away from his father, who thought he had been killed. If anyone had the right to

question why, Joseph did! However, we can clearly see how much he grew to trust in God's control over his life. When he came face to face with his brothers again, he was able to tell them that God sent him ahead of them to preserve their lives! He acknowledged that God saw things differently and had His mighty hand over him all along, especially when he didn't understand God's reasons for everything that had happened to him.

From a human perspective, the world, and even our lives, often seem to be random and unpredictable, but God is ultimately in control. In Joseph's story, God used even the cruel and unjust actions of Joseph's own brothers to fulfill His plan. People's sinful ways do not ruin God's sovereign plans; in fact, nothing can really stand in the way of God's will for us as long as we surrender control to Him and follow His leading and guidance.

Our life is like a tapestry. Now, we can only see a few sections, maybe with some knots or loose ends. But someday, we'll see the full, beautiful picture that God is creating. He will show us the world's history and our own personal history, all from His own perspective. I pray for enduring patience to run the race until we can view the final picture. Through God's grace and power, we can embrace both the good and the bad, knowing that God is weaving a beautiful picture with our lives! 🌟

**Naveed Frank** is originally from Pakistan. He is serving as a Computer Teacher for Palau Mission Academy on the island of Palau. He began his service in March of 2012 and will continue through May of 2013. Naveed is willing to go anywhere God calls him to serve and hopes that his story will encourage others to seek God's will for their lives and see His wonderful plans come to fruition.



**Top: Feeding alligators at Ngemelis Rock Island**



**Left: With volunteer friends Chris on right and Victor on left.**



## New Volunteers

**Abapo, Christine Bebing**—ESL Teacher, from Philippines to Mongolia  
**Aquino, Gonzalo**—Music Teacher, from Argentina to Palau  
**Acuña, Andrés Esteban**—Dean of Men/Chaplain, from Argentina to Lebanon  
**Acuña-Jonas, Natalia Carolina**—Dean of Women, from Argentina to Lebanon  
**Adap, Jon Dean Imperio**—Comm/Video Prod Asst, from Philippines to Kenya  
**Aranda, Mauro Daniel**—Physiotherapy Teacher, from Argentina to Mexico  
**Beerman, Kaylie Lauren**—Kindergarten Teacher and Librarian, from USA to Yap  
**Barbosa de Sousa, Elison**—Pastoral Asst, from Brazil to UK  
**Bonilla, Benjamin Manuel**—English/Bible/Ministry Tchr, from Puerto Rico to Korea  
**Bonilla-Aviles, Arlyn Ann**—English/Bible/Ministry Tchr, from Puerto Rico to Korea  
**Brown, Mishayla DeLynne**—School Teacher/Church Asst, from USA to Fiji  
**Casiano Monterroso, Sergio Alfonso**—Evang&Comm, from Chile to Chile  
**Cassimy, Evan John**—Engl&Bible Tchr/Chrch Plant/Bible Work, from USA to Brazil  
**Castro Ramos, Vanessa Esther**—Communications Asst, from Argentina to Ecuador  
**Etienne, Marjorie-Fleure**—English/Bible/Ministry Teacher, from USA to Korea  
**Ginting, Andreas Gromiko**—Bible Worker, from Indonesia to Australia  
**Goncalves, Mario Nicola**—Medical Intern, from Argentina to Lesotho  
**Goncalves-Vejar Moya, Mary Esther**—Chapl Dept Asst, from Argentina to Lesotho  
**Guimarães, Liz da Motta**—One Yr In Miss Volunteer, from Brazil to USA  
**Habib, Essam**—One Yr In Miss Volunteer, from Lebanon to USA  
**Hassan, Carolina Da Silva**—Library Asst, from Brazil to South Africa  
**Hermann, Lukas**—One Year In Miss Volunteer, from Germany to USA  
**Hodgson, Kessle Martin**—English Language Teacher, from USA to Russia  
**Hwang, Jieun Emily**—English/Bible/Ministry Teacher, from USA to Korea  
**Irving, Jinina Dorisa**—One Yr In Miss Volunteer, from USA to USA  
**Jackson, Patsy Naomi**—ESL Teacher from USA to Thailand  
**Jang, Eun Young**—English Teacher, from USA to Korea  
**Joshua, Daryl Abilash**—One Year In Miss Volunteer, from India to USA  
**Kang, Dongwon**—One Yr In Miss Volunteer, from South Korea to USA  
**Kisling, Savannah Summer**—School Teacher/Church Asst, from USA to Fiji  
**Knoll, Franziska**—Campus Ministries Intern, from Germany to USA  
**Krpalek, Dragana**—Rehab Tech Traing Prog Acad Lead, from Australia to Haiti  
**Krpalek, Joseph Theodore**—Nurse, from USA to Haiti  
**Kyeusi, Laetitia Kalima**—Doctors With Miss Med Intern, from Argentina to Congo  
**Lee, Yu-Ra**—Middle School Math Teacher, from South Korea to Chuuk  
**Lekoetje, Nyakallo Alina**—English/Bible/Ministry Tchr, from South Africa to Korea  
**Longfellow, Gary Kent**—8th Grade/Science Teacher, from USA to Taiwan  
**Lopez, Sebastian Andre**—ESL and Bible Teacher, from USA to Poland  
**Loriezo, Alyssa Michelle**—English Teacher, from USA to Ecuador  
**Luaya, Lea Verian**—Reassign as Guest House Caretaker, from Philippines to Israel  
**Luce, Bradley Schuler**—7th Grade Teacher, from USA to Yap  
**Maluila, Jeremiah Clement**—One Yr In Miss Volunteer, from Tanzania to USA  
**Martinez, Dayana Cesia**—Asst Dean, from Bolivia to South Africa  
**McCabe, Ryan**—Graphic Designer, from USA to Lebanon  
**Miller, Charmaine Cassandra**—English Teacher, from Canada to Korea  
**Miller, Jason Thomas**—Teacher, from USA to Honduras  
**Molleapasa Gutierrez, Vladimir**—Software Developer, from Peru to Colombia  
**Morales Palma, Adriana Giselle**—1 Year In Miss Volunteer, from Uruguay to USA  
**Moravetz, Sarah Christine**—High School English Teacher, from USA to Yap  
**Mvumvu, Kholiswa**—English/Bible/Ministry Teacher, from South Africa to Korea  
**Ogaga, Aghogho Paul**—One Yr In Miss Volunteer, from Nigeria to USA  
**Oglivie, Carla**—English Teacher, from USA to Korea  
**Ombao, William Gallano**—Church Pastor, from USA to Thailand  
**Orihuela Meza, Danitza**—Food Production Engineer, from Peru to Colombia  
**Paiva Dias, Aline**—Guest Administration, from Brazil to Austria  
**Paredes-Abanto, Jorge David**—Admissions Office Asst, from Peru to Germany  
**Pereira, Glaucia Moreno**—Nurse, from Brazil to Cameroon  
**Pillay, Alveena Ann**—One Yr In Miss Volunteer, from South Africa to USA  
**Preza, Silvia Raquel**—English/Bible/Ministry Teacher, from USA to Korea  
**Rakasi, Anasa Numitaka**—Maintenance/Gardener/Security Guard, from Fiji to Laura  
**Ramos, Marvin Hilario**—One Year In Miss Volunteer, from Philippines to USA  
**Rasmussen, Pernille Riedmann**—One Yr In Miss Volunteer, from Denmark to USA  
**Reichert, Jordan Christopher**—Chaplain, from USA to Egypt  
**Reitsma, Audrey Christine**—Boarding Dean for Women, from USA to New Zealand  
**Rico, Samuel Emilio**—Doctors With Miss Med Intern, from Colombia to Malawi  
**Rodrigues de Paula, Anderson**—Asst Dean, from Brazil to South Africa

**Rogers, Jeremy Daniel**—ESL and Bible Teacher, from USA to Poland  
**Rowland, Jeremy Douglas**—Asst Dean of Men, from USA to Denmark  
**Salas González, Adriana Patricia**—Asst Translator, from Venezuela to Brazil  
**Sanchez, Carlos Homero**—One Yr In Miss Volunteer, from Mexico to USA  
**Schnell, Andrew James**—Asst Dean of Men, from USA to Denmark  
**Simpson, Suné**—Boarding School Asst, from South Africa to UK  
**Stanyer, Anthony David**—One Yr In Miss Volunteer, from Philippines to USA  
**Thomas, David Roger Winston**—Maint Engineer, from Canada to Cameroon  
**Thorpe, Nathan Keith**—English/Bible Teacher, from Australia to Thailand  
**Viko, Suesue**—Engl & Bible Tchr/Church Planting/Bible Work, from Australia to Brazil  
**Wageman, Travis Jaye**—Asst Dean of Men, from USA to Denmark  
**Wang, Samuel**—Reassign as Contextualized Resource Developer, from USA to Taiwan  
**Watson, Zoe Lyn**—5th Grade Teacher, from USA to Yap  
**West, Matthew Addison**—Math Teacher, from USA to Nicaragua  
**West, Victoria Kathryn**—Math Teacher, from USA to Nicaragua  
**Williams, Stephanie**—English/Bible/Ministry Teacher, from USA to Korea  
**Wood, Joshua Luke**—One Yr In Miss Volunteer, from Australia to USA  
**Wright, Jared Andrew**—Asst HR Dir/Counselor, from USA to Nepal  
**Xavier, Lauren Alberto**—Boarding School Asst, from Brazil to UK  
**Zamora, Sharnie Love Calma**—Communication Asst, from Philippines to Kenya  
**Zenner, Maria**—Primary School English Teacher, from USA to Uruguay  
**Zenner, Guillermo**—Asst Chaplain and Asst Boys' Dean, from USA to Uruguay

In God's world,  
for those who are  
in earnest, there  
is no failure.  
No work truly  
done, no word  
earnestly spoken,  
no sacrifice freely  
made, was ever in  
vain.

—F.W. Robertson



Hello Korea! Story on page 10.



# volunteer opportunities

<b>Austria</b> Maintenance Bogenhofen Seminary	<b>Bolivia</b> Orchestra Dir/ Musician Bolivia Adventist University	<b>China</b> English Teacher Xin Wei Language School	<b>East Timor</b> Grade One Teacher Timor Leste Mission	<b>Egypt</b> Teacher Nile Union Academy	<b>Germany</b> Information Technology Asst Friedensau Adventist University	<b>Indonesia</b> English Teacher Adventist English Conversation School
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<b>Japan</b> English Instructor Saniku Gakuin College	<b>Kenya</b> Physician/ General Surgeon Kendu Adventist Hospital	<b>Malawi</b> IT Project Assistant Malamulo Hospital	<b>Mexico</b> English Teacher/ ESL Teacher Linda Vista University	<b>Nepal</b> General Surgeon Seohae Sahmyook Elementary School	<b>Spain</b> Assistant Dean Spanish Adventist Seminary	<b>Uruguay</b> Website/ Computer Maintenance Uruguay Adventist Academy
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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](http://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, to go [www.adventistvolunteers.org](http://www.adventistvolunteers.org), click on "Contact Us."