



Keeping the Flame Ablaze

Looking back at the past five years of Adventist education in the Inter-European Division (EUD), I am full of gratitude for God's guidance and providence that, despite our shortcomings and deficiencies, have brought us so far. It has been exciting to see the new projects completed and best practices implemented.

Italian Adventist College recently inaugurated a new multi-functional building that hosts the library, the cafeteria, and the guesthouse of the institution. Located in the center of a vast hospital area serving Florence and its environs, the guesthouse "CasAurora" offers accommodation at an affordable price for relatives of patients who face an extended stay in the hospital. Being confronted with the suffering of a loved one often causes guesthouse visitors to ponder the ultimate questions about life and death, and a chaplain is

always available to provide assistance.

The interaction between students and guesthouse personnel also helps to transform CasAurora into a community of influence for the church. This is reflected in the following letter from a guest: "In this corner of paradise, where I stayed . . . to be close to my wife . . . hospitalized in a neighboring clinic, and where people hitherto unknown to us have been praying for her and offered flowers, I could appreciate again the dimension of living in a fellowship. . . . I discovered the vitality of Christianity in a community that is active and young in spirit. I appreciated the deep faith, commitment, consistency and, at the same time, open-mindedness of staff, theology students, and pastors. Thanks to [personal names] and others whose names I have forgotten, but not the faces or the conversations. . . . Even if [though] I am not a Christian, I found a world where I feel I belong culturally."

Other Outreach Activities

As part of training future pastors, our eight theological seminaries continue to engage in outreach activities. One activity is Friedensau Adventist University's *ProMission* project among the Maasai ethnic group in Tanzania.

For 15 years, two university lecturers, László Szabó and Stefan Höschele, worked in Tanzania as missionaries and made friends with many indigenous people. This opened the way for teams from Friedensau (located in Möckern, Germany) to make annual three-week visits to distribute water and help provide a constant water supply by installing water pipes.

Because of the drought, little food is available in this area. So the students also distribute fruit, vegetables, rice, and beans. Basic education is not yet common among the Maasai, and most of the adults can neither read nor write. For their children, chances are

B Y B A R N A M A G Y A R O S I

better now, but public schools are very far away, so another goal of the project is to build school and community houses in the steppe where the Maasai live. During the week, the buildings will be used as schools, and during weekends as churches. The EUD currently operates seven preschools, with more than 400 children attending.

But people need more. They need hope. This is why preaching the gospel is also a crucial part of this project. During their stay in Tanzania, the students regularly visit the people in their homes, where they pray for the sick and share their hope. After the students return to Germany, the work continues. *ProMission* hires local evangelists and teachers who serve the peo-

ple wholeheartedly.

Another area of activity that requires even more attention is Adventist Ministry to College and University Students (AMiCUS) attending non-Adventist universities. Its most active chapters in Germany, Italy, Portugal, Romania, and Spain have rich and multi-faceted approaches to providing spiritual support for college students, and involving young adults in outreach to their peers and faculty. An example of this is the *¿Por qué?* initiative by the Spanish AMiCUS,¹ a series of public lectures that stimulates conversation about transcendental matters such as the existence of God, the veracity of the Bible, and the reconciliation of faith and science. Students are encouraged to invite friends whose worldview is

different from theirs in order to start an open dialogue between believers and non-believers.

Facilitating Faculty Interaction

Even when language barriers hinder networking between our schools, EUD educational leaders create events that facilitate interaction among teachers and staff members such as conferences for teachers in Portugal and Spain, as well as for German-speaking countries (Austria, Germany, Switzerland), a convention for librarians, dormitory deans, and chaplains organized in partnership with the Trans-European Division, and the now-traditional, biennial Convention of the European Theology Teachers (ETTC).



The *ProMission* project at Friedensau Adventist University, Möckern, Germany, provides opportunities for intercultural exchange between university students and the Massai people of Tanzania.

Language Programs Change Lives

Five of our colleges² offer language programs that, beyond introducing students to a foreign culture, also often prove to be catalysts of a new life in Jesus.

Sharon³ wanted to spend the summer of 2013 in France learning the local language. She arrived at the Adventist University of France in Collonges crushed in spirit and feeling burned out after struggling through a deep darkness that destroyed her self-worth, her relationships with others, and her faith.

There were, of course, people who wanted to help her: family, friends, and a coach, but nothing seemed to work. God seemed really far away. Slowly, she became convinced that a different environment could help, and through interaction with teachers, peers, and supportive personnel, she started to recapture her *joie de vivre*. The spiritual theme of that summer, “Jesus Tweets,” reignited her interest in a relationship with her Savior. But the summer passed quickly, and she was afraid of suffering a relapse. However, with new determination and through God’s providence, she was able to return to Collonges in September filled with optimism for the future and the desire to be baptized.

Significant Challenges

This bird’s eye view of the richness and quality of the educational experience in our territory is not an attempt to deny or ignore Adventist education’s manifold difficulties in Europe. In a predominantly tuition-free public school setting, it is a constant challenge to maintain enrollment and to keep the accounts balanced. In an overtly secular environment, leaders and faculty must be intentional in maintaining the Adventist identity and philosophy of education. In a Europe fragmented by national pride, languages, and cultures, it takes persistent efforts to network among our schools. In this area, with



Marius Marinescu was reunited with his family after 12 years of separation.

its giant universities, we need sustained creativity and consistent quality to show the relevance of Adventist education. But because of the commitment of almost 800 teachers in 67 institutions, almost 6,000 students have the privilege of receiving quality education based on the foundational premise that “the work of redemption and the work of education are one.”⁴

In closing, let’s look at another transformational experience, which occurred at “Maranatha” Adventist High School in Cluj-Napoca, Romania.

It’s About Saving Lives

Although barely 8 years old, the little boy already felt lonely, abandoned, and angry. His parents had immigrated to Spain, leaving him in the care of his

grandparents in Romania. Out of rebellion and despair, he and his 11-year-old cousin decided to run away. They traveled 120 km (74.5 miles) to the capital of the country, Bucharest, where they slept at the North Railway Station.

When their parents heard about the boys’ disappearance, they hurried home to search for them. The police were alerted, posters printed, flyers distributed, but to no avail. The boys had vanished into the metropolis.

The guards chased the two vagabonds outside the precinct of the North Railway Station building, which forced the boys to live in makeshift cardboard shelters. On a November morning, policemen found them shiv-



Attendees at the 2014 Chaplains, Deans, and Librarians Convention at Newbold College in England.



Biennial Convention of European Theology Teachers at Middle East University, near Beirut, Lebanon, in 2013.

ering in the cold. Horrified at the thought of being sent home, the boys pretended not to know their identities. Consequently, they were given new names and birth certificates, making it unlikely that their parents would ever see them again. Placed in a child-care unit, their lives seemed to have been set on an irreversible course.

However, due to providential circumstances, the younger boy, Marius, was moved to a Christian home, and in 2010 he was sent to “Maranatha” Adventist High School. But he received more than an education: loving class-

mates, understanding and motivating teachers, caring dormitory deans, and a worldview that opened his mind to new possibilities. He never mentioned his family, though he was aware that he had one, or spoke his real name, though he knew it. Nevertheless, through the regular spiritual programs of the school, and the loving relationships he developed with the faculty and chaplain, and with his classmates, Marius embraced the reality of a heavenly Father and began to long for his earthly

family. In his junior year, he reopened a chapter of his life that had been sealed, choosing to reveal his real identity and reconnect with his family.

On the way home, questions flooded his mind. Would anyone recognize him? Would his parents welcome him back? How would the family react to his newly discovered faith? Encouraged by the story of the prodigal son, which he had learned in Bible class, and guided by the intrigued residents of his home village, whom he asked for directions, he found the beautiful house that belonged to his parents. Even though 12 years had passed, his mother recognized him. Providentially, during his absence, his parents, too, had become acquainted with God. Shedding tears of joy, he began to understand more fully everything he had learned about God.

Our academy experienced these moments of spiritual intensity with joy and gratefulness. Marius is only an example of many students whose hearts have been changed through Adventist education and whose longing for a better place is kindled in our classrooms. *Soli Deo Gloria* [Glory to God alone]!



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NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. The name of the association in Spanish is Asociación de Estudiantes y Graduados Universitarios Adventistas de España (AEGUAE).
2. Italian Adventist University (Italian), Friedensau Adventist University (German), Bogenhofen Seminary (German), Sagunto Adventist Seminary (Spanish), and Adventist University of France (French) currently offer a language program.
3. Not her real name.
4. Ellen G. White, *Education* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Publ. Assn., 1903), p. 30.