

March 2024

Dear AWR Friend,

As I write this letter, I'm back in Rwanda after almost eight years. In 2016, a group of us from Adventist World Radio were here, along with Elder Wilson, to hold multiple evangelistic events as part of the first major Total Member Involvement (TMI) series. What happened then was amazing, with more than 2,000 preaching sites and over 100,000 people baptized throughout this small country that's only the size of the state of Maryland.

Since then, there has been a membership explosion, and it now stands at 1.2 million! If you consider that's the same number of Adventists in all of the United States, it's quite a high percentage for this small nation, and Adventists are listed as the third main religious group in Rwanda.

I was just speaking with the North-West Rwanda Field President, Pastor Mutuyimana Nkundakozera—who just happens to be the grandson of Pastor Mokotsi Mbyirukira. If you recall, I mentioned him in last month's newsletter as the first African union president and a great friend when my wife Kathy and I worked in the Congo years ago. Now his grandson is a field president, and he shared that their goal is to duplicate their church membership to 2.4 million in two years!

How things have changed in a country that 30 years ago saw one of the biggest genocides in history! God's grace descended on this little nation and has worked in a powerful way to change hearts. Our AWR radio station has been pivotal, sharing God's love and the gospel message of forgiveness. Today, it's one of the most recognized radio stations in Rwanda.

Now we're here again with several from our AWR leadership team for the *Rwanda for Christ 2024* event, invited to hold five evangelistic series. God is working in a powerful way, as hearts are being touched. Let me share what happened last night as I closed the meeting in my preaching site near Lake Kivu.

## A CALL IN THE RAIN

To accommodate the people attending, most of the preaching locations are outdoors, with a tent covering the platform, and tents covering the audience seating areas. My site is no exception, with close to 6,000 people attending on most nights.

As I was closing the meeting last night, it began to rain. By the time I made the altar call, it was pouring, with sheets of rain sliding down the sides of the tents and pooling across the area. I made the altar call inviting people to step forward, but nobody moved. No one wanted to leave the shelter of the tents. Pastor Mbyirukira, who was on the platform with me, stepped forward and also made an altar call, but again, no one moved.

I was praying, asking God to intervene and stop the rain. But then it came to me, and I knew exactly what God wanted me to do. I stepped out of the shelter of the tent and came to the front of the platform.

**OVER  
50  
YEARS  
OF MINISTRY**



The AWR "Rwanda for Christ" evangelistic team.



Duane made an altar call during a heavy downpour. Nobody wanted to step forward into the soaking rain, but you'll never guess what happened next...

Standing in the rain, I made the altar call. Almost immediately, two things happened: people started coming forward, and the rain stopped. Soon, a large crowd had gathered at the foot of the platform, and we praised God for His intervention and for the decisions that were made.

It reminded me of Joshua 3:13, when God promised the people of Israel the Jordan River would part when the feet of the priests touched the water, and not before. They had to first move forward and take a step of faith, and God would do the rest. I thank God for this experience that reminded me we must live by faith and not by sight. That's what I want for our AWR ministry team—and that includes you, too!

The meetings conclude this coming Sabbath, and more than 700 people have already made decisions for baptism. By the time you receive this letter, our team will be back home and preparing for our next event in Papua New Guinea. And this one's a real whopper!



*Duane baptizes one of the many who gave their hearts to Jesus in Rwanda.*

## PAPUA NEW GUINEA — PNG FOR CHRIST 2024

For more than two years now, we have been preparing for *PNG for Christ 2024* with pre-meetings and health clinics. If you remember, we were all set to go in 2020, but the world shut down due to the COVID-19 pandemic and everything was put on hold. Or so it seemed . . . except that our brethren in PNG continued to work and prepare. Many small groups and house churches were established, and right now, this island nation has more than 6,000 new branch churches, causing a shortage of trained pastors, leaders and resources! It boggles the mind, but it shouldn't surprise us. We know even more amazing things will take place when the fullness of the Latter Rain is poured out!

Recently, PNG Union Mission president Pastor Malachi Yani said, "The Papua New Guinea church growth crisis is unlike anything we've ever witnessed!" And what a good crisis to have! This coming May, we are organizing more than 2,000 preaching sites throughout PNG to help solidify the new members and grow the churches even more! God is doing amazing things everywhere. Again God's promise is being fulfilled: "Look at the nations and watch, and be utterly amazed, for I am going to do something in your day that you would not believe, even if you were told." (Habakkuk 1:5)



*Church members erect a sign to announce the upcoming "PNG for Christ" meetings that will be presented at more than 2,000 sites across Papua New Guinea.*

## BALI, INDONESIA

For most people, the island of Bali is associated with beautiful beaches, exotic temples and lavish vacation spots. And while there are several Adventist churches on the island, they're in the Indonesian language, and none in the local Balinese dialect. It's very difficult to convert a Balinese, and while Bali is predominantly Hindu, the Balinese are extremely devout, even more so than in India. For this reason, try as we might, we couldn't find a producer for our radio programs who spoke the Balinese language.

Unbeknownst to us, a Hindu priest was convicted of a crime he didn't commit and was put in prison. In Bali, prisoners are allowed to keep their smartphones, and this priest came across our Indonesian podcasts. Out of curiosity and without much else to occupy his free time, he began to listen. The more he listened, the more his interest grew, until he finally contacted our producer in Jakarta, who began sending him Bible studies.



While in prison, this priest had to support his family back home, and he did so with creative crafts. He was supplied with old newspapers that he would use to make these crafts that he would then send to his family. And while he worked, he listened to our programs.

The prison officials began to see a change in him and decided to cut his sentence short. As soon as he was released, he contacted our producer and expressed his desire to be baptized. Being the lone Adventist Balinese speaker, our church leaders in Bali decided to train him to be our radio speaker in the Balinese language.



A former Hindu priest from Bali is translating AWR programming into his native language.

To make a long story short, this former Hindu priest now translates all our programs, including the *Revelation of Hope* series! Everything is then sent to our AWR center in Guam, where our shortwave radio towers transmit these messages across thousands of miles—reaching not only Bali, but almost every corner of our planet!

But the story doesn't end there, because he's so on fire that now his whole family has also been baptized, and twice a week, on Wednesdays and Sabbaths, approximately 40 Balinese gather at his home to study the Bible and worship together. No one from the

group has been baptized yet, but they keep coming and studying—and we keep praying for them!

Recently, he was asked why he's so passionate about the gospel, and his response was simple but profound: "Now I understand what it is to be forgiven." Coming from a culture of salvation by merits, God's love and forgiveness have blown him away! Once again, the message of the cross has toppled centuries-old walls of prejudice and tradition.



This enthusiastic former priest is now holding weekly Bible studies in his Bali home with as many as 40 friends and neighbors attending!

## WISAM ALI UPDATE — THE PENTECOSTAL PASTOR

Last month I promised to share a story I couldn't squeeze into the newsletter, so let me share it now.

Marwan, an Arab Pentecostal pastor in Israel, had a radio and TV station in a city near Nazareth, from which he shared Bible truths. One day as he was studying, he realized there were things he was teaching that didn't match what the Bible said. He was especially confused about the day of worship. Why didn't Christians worship on the Saturday Sabbath?

Then last year, a rainstorm flooded his studios and destroyed his equipment. He asked God, "Why did you allow this to happen? I was teaching your message to the people."

He didn't want to go work in other radio stations because he felt there was a problem with Bible understanding. He prayed about what he should do, until one day he heard about our AWR radio center in Nazareth. What intrigued him was that we kept the Sabbath. He called our station and spoke with Pastor Wisam Ali. He explained that he'd searched the internet for information on Adventists, and was confused by what he found, as there was also a lot of misinformation, so he wanted to understand for himself why we kept the Sabbath.

He came to our studios and met with Wisam. They studied for hours, beginning with Creation Sabbath and our fundamental biblical beliefs. Pastor Marwan said, "I can tell you I am in the right place. I felt it right away."

After they prayed together, he added, "I couldn't find a single word you said that was not matching the Bible. I accept everything. From this day forward, my family and I will keep the Sabbath."

Wisam asked him, “What about your church?” and the pastor replied, “I want you to come and present these truths to my church. I know my church loves and trusts me with whatever I bring them. They will accept it.”

This is where the story ended last month, but last week I received an update from Wisam that said the following:

*After we finished the Bible studies, I arranged for Pastor Marwan to meet with our church leaders from the Israel Field, President Daniel Stojanovic and Secretary Julio Mendez. During the meeting, they asked him about his faith and beliefs. They were amazed when they heard him speak.*

*At the end of the meeting, Pastor Marwan told them he accepted our beliefs and invited them to come to his church and share with his members. This past Sabbath, he and his wife, along with his children, announced their faith and were accepted into the Adventist fellowship by profession of faith. We are now working with his church members, giving them Bible studies every Monday, and Pastor Marwan will begin helping at the radio station.*



*Wisam with Pastor Marwan at the AWR360° Evangelism Center in Nazareth.*

Wow! These are the reports that keep us going. God’s news is so much better than all the news the world has to offer!

I’ve often heard people say, “AWR is good at mobilizing large evangelistic events.” And that may be true, but it’s because God opens up amazing opportunities for service, and we take up the challenge. Sometimes it seems impossible, but as we advance by faith—and as our feet touch the “water”—God opens a way where there seemed to be no way!

Last year we led the *Christ for Europe* initiative, and we’re gearing up for *PNG for Christ 2024*. And right now, as we’re here in Rwanda, another AWR team is in Tanzania leading another major evangelistic event (more on that next month). Yes, we’re being pushed by the Master who told His servant, “Go out into the highways and hedges, and urge them to come in so that my house may be filled.”

That’s why you and I exist as a church. God has called us to prepare the world for the Second Coming of Jesus. Everything else is a distraction, and until our focus becomes the mission, we as a church will continue to wander in the desert. I don’t know about you, but I want to leave this old ball of mud and go home!

It takes courage and it takes resources, but we’re so thankful for your prayers and support that part the waters every time! Whether it’s funding for Godpods, radio stations and studios, live evangelism, or materials, it’s as we work together through God’s Spirit that the work will be finished and God’s truth will shine to every corner of the planet.

Thank you for making such a profound difference and changing lives for eternity!

Yours in the Blessed Hope,

Duane McKey  
President

