

# 2012 Yearbook of Jehovah's Witnesses



# CONTENTS

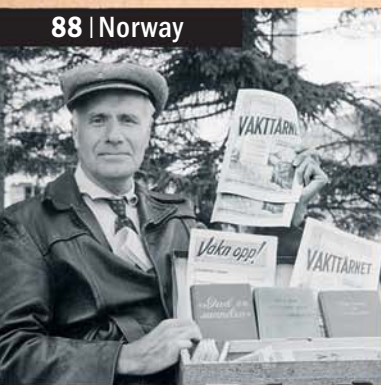
**2** | 2012 Yeartext

**3** | A Letter From  
the Governing Body

**6** | Highlights  
of the Past Year

**56** | Preaching and  
Teaching Earth Wide

**88** | Norway



**164** | Rwanda



# 2012 Yearbook of Jehovah's Witnesses

Containing the Report for the Service Year of 2011



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*2012 Yearbook of Jehovah's Witnesses*  
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## 2012 YEARETEXT

**“Your word is truth.”**

—JOHN 17:17.

How thankful we can be that our loving heavenly Father has revealed the truth to us! His Word shows us the best way to live and how to get the most out of life. It protects us from vain and harmful pursuits, liberates us from bondage to religious lies, and leads us to true peace of mind. It gives meaning to our lives now and provides a marvelous hope for the future.

The truth unites us with millions of our brothers throughout the earth. Most important, Bible truth teaches us about Jehovah and shows us how we can draw close to him. Let us never take for granted what Jehovah has given us. May we rejoice in the truth and let it guide us in all our ways.





## A LETTER FROM THE Governing Body

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Dear Fellow Witnesses of Jehovah:

It gives us great pleasure to write to you dear faithful servants of Jehovah, now numbering over seven million. When you meet a fellow believer from another part of the world, you instantly feel a special bond of affection for that one. (John 13:34, 35) No doubt as you read this *Yearbook*, the captivating accounts of the faith and loyalty of your brothers and sisters in various lands will again cause you to sense that unique bond.

Reports from around the world indicate that a great number of you are taking your Family Worship program seriously. Those of you with small children have used great ingenuity to capture and keep the attention of your little ones. (Eph. 6:4) Couples are drawing closer together as a result of the spiritual interchange this program affords. (Eph. 5:28-33) Indeed, individuals and families are benefiting from this arrangement for in-depth study of God's Word.—Josh. 1:8, 9.

Our hearts go out to all of you who have suffered losses as a result of recent natural disasters. We take this opportunity to thank the many who, without hesitation, have joined relief efforts during such times of calamity. (Acts 11:28-30; Gal. 6:9, 10) Additionally, in each congregation, there are those of you who discern the

material needs of our brothers and quietly go about caring for them. Like Dorcas of old, you abound in “good deeds and gifts of mercy.” (Acts 9:36) Be assured that Jehovah notices this and that he will repay you accordingly.—Matt. 6:3, 4.

In some lands, your rights are being trampled underfoot by those who manipulate laws in order to ‘frame trouble by decree.’ (Ps. 94:20-22) Realizing that Jesus foretold such persecution, you are enduring courageously and looking to Jehovah as your refuge. (John 15:19, 20) Be assured that we mention you dear ones regularly in our prayers as you continue to “make a defense before everyone that demands of you a reason for the hope in you.” —1 Pet. 3:13-15.

We warmly commend the millions of you who are remaining morally clean year after year despite Satan’s relentless onslaught of depravity and his insidious methods of spreading it. At a time when the world’s moral standards are plunging to new depths, you are “acquiring power in the Lord and in the mightiness of his strength.” (Eph. 6:10) You have “put on the complete suit of armor from God,” and you are thus standing firm against “the machinations of the Devil.” (Eph. 6:11, 12) Know that Jehovah is using your example to give a resounding answer to the taunter, Satan!—Prov. 27:11.

We were delighted to learn that in 2011, there were 19,374,737 in attendance at the Memorial of

our Lord's death. That impressive number of attendees is due in part to your tremendous response to the call for auxiliary pioneers last April. Millions of earth's inhabitants could hear the unified sound of praise to Jehovah coming from his loyal Witnesses! (Rom. 10:18) Whether you were one of the 2,657,377 who served as auxiliary pioneers that month or you endeavored to increase your activity in some way, all of you made us beam with pleasure because of your willing spirit and zeal for the work.—Ps. 110:3; Col. 3:23.

Last year, 263,131 new ones symbolized their dedication to Jehovah. We thank Jehovah for this, and we thank all of you for joining us in extending the invitation to yet others: “‘Come!’ And let anyone hearing say: ‘Come!’ And let anyone thirsting come; let anyone that wishes take life’s water free.” (Rev. 22:17) Especially after having considered facets of God’s established Kingdom at our 2011 district conventions, we say with more feeling than ever, “Let God’s Kingdom come!” Stimulated by Jesus’ assurance “I am coming quickly,” we wholeheartedly add our voices to the apostle John’s response: “Amen! Come, Lord Jesus.”—Rev. 22:20.

As you keep on the watch for that thrilling event, please be assured that we truly love each of you dear brothers and sisters, who are proving your love for Jehovah “in deed and truth”—1 John 3:18.

Your brothers,

*Governing Body of Jehovah's Witnesses*



# Highlights of the past year

**DESPITE** distressing world conditions, Jehovah's Witnesses have enjoyed another productive year in their sacred service. With God's blessing, the truth of the good news "is bearing fruit and increasing in all the world." (Col. 1:5, 6) We are sure that you will find this year's report both encouraging and faith-strengthening.

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***Above: Pioneers and publishers brought their Bible students to Jeannette's home to conduct their Bible studies. (See pages 8-9)***

# NEW ARRANGEMENT FOR AUXILIARY PIONEERING



There was great excitement when auxiliary pioneers were given the option of working toward a 30-hour or a 50-hour requirement for the month of April. Many who could not ordinarily share in this feature of service eagerly embraced the opportunity to do so. Thousands of publishers joined the ranks of the auxiliary pioneers for the first time, and many who had pioneered in the past were delighted to do so again. Additionally, many publishers who were not able to auxiliary pioneer made an effort to increase their preaching activity. What was the result?

***A group of regular and auxiliary pioneers leaving for the ministry in Madrid, Spain***

Most branches reported increases that far exceeded previous peaks. Worldwide, 2,657,377 publishers shared in the auxiliary pioneer work—about five times more than the peak for the preceding year! Eighty percent of the worldwide Bethel family—16,292 out of 20,290 brothers and sisters—shared in this privilege of service. Is it not thrilling to know that Jehovah's servants did more in the preaching work in April than they had done in any other month in history?

Just over a year after the devastating earthquake that claimed the lives of some 300,000 persons, Haiti reported new all-time peaks in the preaching activity in April. Of the 17,009 publishers there, 6,185 served

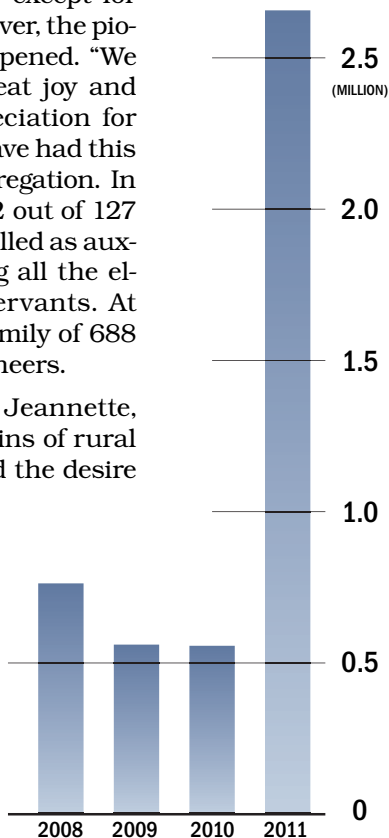


as auxiliary pioneers. A special campaign to distribute the brochure *When Someone You Love Dies*, recently released in Haitian Creole, provided the grieving population with much-needed comfort and hope.

Our brothers and sisters in Nigeria faced a unique challenge during April. On four days set aside for an election (three of which were Saturdays), the government restricted people from moving about between 7:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m. except for electoral purposes. However, the pioneer spirit was not dampened. “We are writing you with great joy and hearts filled with appreciation for the wonderful time we have had this month,” wrote one congregation. In another congregation, 92 out of 127 baptized publishers enrolled as auxiliary pioneers, including all the elders and ministerial servants. At Bethel, 555 out of the family of 688 enrolled as auxiliary pioneers.

**They Met the Challenge.** Jeannette, who lives in the mountains of rural Burundi, has always had the desire

**Worldwide,  
2,657,377 Publishers  
Shared in the Auxiliary  
Pioneer Work**



to pioneer, but she suffers from a chronic heart condition that prevents her from walking far or climbing steep hills. Jeannette rejoiced when she heard that the hour requirement for auxiliary pioneers in April was reduced. To help her carry out her desire to pioneer, the elders arranged for her to preach in territory close to her house. In addition, pioneers and publishers brought their Bible students to her home for their Bible studies. By the end of the month, Jeannette was delighted to have started four Bible studies. “I would love to pioneer again,” she says, “and I am confident that Jehovah will help me.”

On the island of Grenada, a young deaf sister pioneered despite having a disability that makes it difficult for her to walk. “It was a real challenge to walk long distances to get to the bus to go in field service,” she said. In addition, this sister was unemployed, and she prayed fervently for Jehovah’s help. In harmony with her prayers, she supported herself financially by selling crocheted articles and handmade jewelry. “I had a full share in the preaching work,” she said afterward, “and I felt the support and encouragement of the brothers. That made me truly happy!”

Toshi, a 101-year-old sister in Japan, eagerly enrolled as an auxiliary pioneer in April. Being unable to leave the facility where she lives, she preaches by writing letters and by witnessing to helpers who come to her room. “Because I am hard of hearing,” explains Toshi, “I talk in a very loud voice. As a result, other people in the vicinity can also hear me.”

Felix, a quadriplegic in Costa Rica, decided to auxiliary pioneer. How, though, could he do so? A literature table was set up outside his home so that



***Toshi witnessing to a helper  
in a nursing home***

he could witness to passersby. By the end of the month, Felix was physically tired, but he felt spiritually refreshed and elated to have started four Bible studies.

Many young publishers were also eager to be included in the special activity in April. For example, in Spain, 11-year-old Sandra and her 7-year-old brother, Alejandro, wanted to increase their preaching activity. Motivated by the zealous spirit of their congrega-

tion and their parents' enthusiastic example, Sandra and Alejandro wished that they could serve as auxiliary pioneers. How could they do so, though, when they were not baptized? Both children drew up a schedule to spend as much time in field service as their parents and then prepared for the ministry by rehearsing presentations on their Family Worship evening. Their parents thought that as the month progressed, the children might tire out. But the two young publishers never wavered for a moment. By April 30, all in the family had reached their personal goal of 30 hours except for young Alejandro, who still needed three hours. So on the last day, out he went with his father in order to reach his goal for the month. How happy they were to have had a busy and satisfying time as a united family!

“I prayed daily,” relates Jean, “that my husband, Philip, and I would be able to preach for 30 hours.” However, Philip, who had served as a district overseer until he was incapacitated by a cerebral aneurysm, lay immobile in a hospital bed in Spain, unable even to speak. His only means of communication was with his eyes, blinking once for yes and twice for no.

“When I told him about the auxiliary pioneering,” continues Jean, “he indicated that he too would like to auxiliary pioneer.” But how could he accomplish his goal?

During the previous months, Jean and Philip had preached to patients, visiting family members, and hospital personnel. “In April we planned to preach right there in our hospital ward for about one hour a day while Philip was awake and could share in the discussion by blinking.”

In March, though, Philip was transferred to an isolation ward. Nevertheless, he and Jean were still able to keep to their schedule, conversing with hospital staff members for several minutes at various times during the day. One of the nurses who accepted the book *What Does the Bible Really*

***Alejandro and his father in Sant Celoni, Barcelona, Spain, on the last day of the month***



## What They Said About Auxiliary Pioneering:

- “For the first time in my life, I was able to auxiliary pioneer. I have no words to express my gratitude for this opportunity!”
- “Thank you so much for this new arrangement. It has given us so much joy.”
- “This was a highlight in the history of our congregation.”
- “Having so many auxiliary pioneers has contributed to a spirit of peace and unity in the congregation.”
- “Yes, Armageddon must be coming soon!”—A non-Witness who noticed our increased activity in April.

*Teach?* looked Philip in the eye and promised to come the next day to read scriptures. When the nurse returned, Jean invited her to read John 17:3 and asked her to explain what she thought it meant. As they continued, using this method, Philip would indicate by blinking his eyes whether the nurse was correct or not. Even when the nurse was not on duty in Philip's ward, she came to assure him that she was asking Jehovah to help her draw close to Him.

Jehovah's servants view this increased activity as a way to demonstrate their love for their neighbor, their gratitude for Jesus Christ's sacrifice, and their devotion to their heavenly Father. They eagerly look forward to March 2012, when they will again have the option of working toward a 30-hour or a 50-hour requirement for the month.



# SCHOOLS THAT TEACH JEHOVAH'S WAYS



Jehovah's organization has taken very seriously the prophecy recorded at Isaiah 2:3: "Let us go up to the mountain of Jehovah, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will instruct us about his ways." For example, while World War II was still raging, the faithful and discreet slave class realized that people from all nations still needed to be taught by Jehovah before the end of Satan's system of things. Hence, arrangements were made to organize such schools as the Watchtower Bible School of Gilead and the Theocratic Ministry School. More recently, the Governing Body has made further adjustments to the various schools that provide specialized training.

***Watchtower Educational  
Center at Patterson,  
New York, U.S.A.***

In October 2010, the Ministerial Training School was renamed the **Bible School for Single Brothers**. Single brothers who serve as elders or ministerial servants will continue to be enrolled in this two-month school. Thus far, 37,445 have benefited from this curriculum worldwide, with many serving as pioneers, traveling overseers, missionaries, and Bethelites.

The new two-month **Bible School for Christian Couples** began in July 2011 and is initially being held at Patterson, New York. English-speaking couples



**“It is written in the prophets, ‘And they will all be taught by Jehovah’ ”**

are eligible to enroll if they are between the ages of 25 and 50, in good health, married for at least two years, and in full-time service for at least the last two consec-

utive years and if the husband is serving as either an elder or a ministerial servant for two consecutive years. Starting in 2012, classes of the Bible School for Christian Couples will be conducted at locations currently used for the Bible School for Single Brothers.

The Bible School for Christian Couples is designed to give specialized training to married cou-

ples so that they may be used more fully by Jehovah and his organization. Most graduates will serve as regular pioneers where the need is greater in their home country. However, a number will be assigned as temporary special pioneers and some will even be trained for the circuit work. A few may receive an assignment in another country if they are qualified and available.

Those who apply for this school should be spiritually mature individuals who have a self-sacrificing spirit. The same instructors who teach the Bible School for Single Brothers will teach this new school, basically following the same curriculum. A few units will be conducted with the brothers only while their wives go in field service. Further details and requirements for those interested in applying will be provided at meetings to be held at district conventions.

The Governing Body has outlined adjustments to the **Watchtower Bible School of Gilead**. Starting with the 132nd class, which began on October 24, 2011, training will be given only to couples who are already in special full-time service, such as field missionaries who have not yet attended Gilead, special pioneers, traveling overseers, and Bethelites. If a couple speak and write English fluently, their Branch Committee may recommend that they attend.

Gilead graduates will be given assignments that will strengthen and stabilize the field and branch organization, whether as field missionaries, traveling overseers, or Bethelites. Those assigned to serve in the field will be used in densely populated areas



where they can have the most profound effect on the preaching activity and on congregation activities. Branch Committees may continue requesting Gilead graduates if there is a particular need in their territory. They may also recommend well-qualified special full-time servants from their own branch territory to attend Gilead School. In some cases, Branch Committees may request that the graduates return to that country after they graduate.

The **School for Branch Committee Members and Their Wives** will be held twice a year in English at Patterson. In a few instances, Country Committee members will also be invited. Branch Committee members who have attended the school in the past will be invited to attend for a second time and will be enrolled with brothers who are attending the school for the first time. Wives of Branch Committee members will attend most of the classes with their husbands.



Certain units of an organizational nature, however, will be conducted with the brothers only, while their wives care for various Bethel assignments.

In addition, two classes of the **School for Traveling Overseers and Their Wives** will be held at Patterson each year. Classes held in the United States now include brothers who have previously attended; they make up about half of each class. Traveling overseers' wives will be invited to attend most of the class sessions.

Are God's people not delighted to take advantage of the education that Jehovah provides? Jesus himself said: "It is written in the Prophets, 'And they will all be taught by Jehovah.'" (John 6:45; Isa. 54:13) We are confident that these adjustments will add greater impetus to the urgent work of preaching the good news in all the inhabited earth before the end comes.



# A GREAT EARTHQUAKE IN JAPAN



News reports from around the world have chronicled a rash of natural disasters, including earthquakes, tsunamis, tornadoes, hurricanes, floods, fires, and volcanic eruptions. While space does not permit a report on all recent disasters, the fortitude with which Jehovah's Witnesses cope with such hardships is well-epitomized by that of our fellow worshippers in Japan.

On Friday, March 11, 2011, at 2:46 p.m., a magnitude 9.0 earthquake struck Japan. The resulting tsunamis devastated many towns and villages along the Pacific coastline. Some 20,000 people either have been confirmed dead or have never been found. In the affected area, four Kingdom Halls were destroyed and four others became unusable. As many as 235 houses of our brothers and sisters were washed away or badly damaged, and more than a thousand houses needed repair.

The quake and tsunamis damaged a nuclear power plant so seriously that radioactive particles were released. The government issued an evacuation order to residents in the vicinity, and overnight, many places became ghost towns. Brothers and sisters in the area were also forced to leave, and two congregations “disappeared.”

Among the over 14,000 Jehovah's Witnesses in the most affected areas, 12 lost their lives, and 5 were se-

◀ **Kingdom Hall in  
Rikuzentakata, Japan**

riously injured; 2 are still missing. Many who survived this traumatic experience lost their homes, possessions and, in many cases, their loved ones.

“I managed to get my mother, who is disabled, into the car and started driving to the designated shelter,” explains Kiyoko of Ofunato. “Then I smelled smoke. I got out of the car and saw a huge wall of water swallow up our house. The water was coming at us! I helped my mother clamber up a railway track embankment. Our car was washed away right before our eyes.”

After the quake, a young brother named Koichi tried to reach his parents’ home, three miles from the sea, in Ishinomaki. As he neared, however, he saw that the whole area was underwater. “Without a boat, I couldn’t go any farther.” Three weeks after the quake, he found his father at a morgue, and three weeks later, his mother.

As soon as the earthquake stopped, Masaaki in Shichigahama decided to park his car at the Kingdom



Hall, half a mile away from the sea. Masaaki recalls: “I found a sister who had also evacuated there. I thought tsunamis would never come this far. Soon, however, black water covered the ground! Our cars started floating. I opened the window, climbed out of my car and stood on the roof, but the sister’s car was washed away and disappeared! I prayed to Jehovah to help her.

“It was snowing, and I was soaked through and shivering. The snow stopped, but the air was frigid. Soon the sun set and darkness descended. The stars were bright and beautiful. I stood on the roof of my car, an island in the ice-cold water. There were others like me, stranded on piles of debris or on the roofs of buildings. I wondered if I would survive until morning. To cheer myself up, I decided to give from memory a public talk that I had given just two weeks earlier. It was an appropriate subject: ‘Where Can You Get Help in Times of Distress?’ After that, I sang the only song I knew by heart: ‘My Father, My God and Friend.’ I sang it again and again. As I sang, I looked back on my service to Jehovah, and my tears flowed.

“Then someone from the house across the street shouted to me, ‘Are you all right? I’ll come to help you!’” The man who called out had made a raft out of floating timbers and was rescuing people in the vicinity. With his help, Masaaki was able to enter someone’s house through the second-floor window. Later, he was relieved to learn that the sister in the other car had also been rescued.

There was joyful anticipation for the wedding of Kohei and Yuko, to be held at the Kingdom Hall in Rikuzentakata on Saturday, March 12. After they had legally registered their marriage at the city hall on

Friday, the earthquake struck. Kohei heard a tsunami warning broadcast by the city and rushed to higher ground. "I saw the whole city in a haze," he recalls. "There was nothing remaining except a few large buildings. Until then, I had been worrying about our arrangements for later that day, but soon I realized that something enormous had occurred."

Kohei and Yuko spent Saturday helping the brothers and sisters in the congregation. "We received relief supplies from neighboring congregations," he said. "I was happy to hear my wife say how glad she was to spend our time and energy for our brothers. I thanked Jehovah for this wonderful mate. The tsunami washed away our new home, our car, and all our possessions. But I am so thankful for the brotherly love shown to us."

**Physical, Spiritual, and Emotional Relief Efforts.** The Japan branch quickly organized three Disaster Relief Committees and repeatedly sent branch representatives to the affected area. When zone overseers Geoffrey Jackson and Izak Marais from world headquarters came to Japan in May, they too met with the brothers and sisters in one of the most devastated areas. A special meeting for the affected congregations was arranged, so that by telephone hookup, some 2,800 brothers at 21 Kingdom Halls were reassured of the love and concern of the worldwide brotherhood.

The Disaster Relief Committees and other volunteers have busily provided relief supplies. The immediate needs were food, water, and fuel. The relief committees also arranged to send clothing in a wide variety of sizes to the affected congregations. Clothes racks and



**Top: Volunteers carrying rubble out of a brother's home in Shibata, Miyagi**



**Left: Branch Committee member giving a talk at a brother's home in Rikuzentakata**

**Bottom: Volunteers making lunch for those attending a special assembly day in the disaster area**





mirrors were set up at meeting places to convert them into temporary “boutiques.”

How thankful the beleaguered brothers and sisters were to see how Jehovah filled their physical and emotional needs! They were especially fortified at Christian meetings. “I gain peace of mind from the meetings,” wrote a sister in the disaster-stricken area. “To me, they are a spiritual lifeline.”

**A Message of Hope.** The Japanese brothers were quick to share comfort from God’s Word with their distraught neighbors. A group of publishers in a city not affected by the disaster decided to do street work with a large signboard, “Why the Tragedy? The answer is in the Bible.” Many people showed interest, and the brothers placed 177 *Bible Teach* books in just one and a half days.

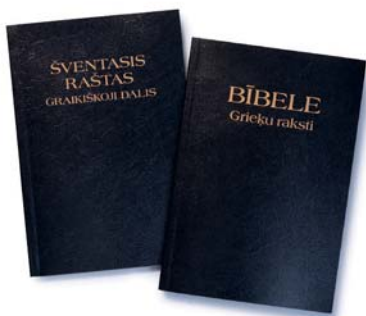
In the disaster-stricken areas, the Witnesses first called on Bible students and return visits and then on neighbors to comfort them. “When I read Matthew 6:34 to a householder,” says Akiko, “she started to cry. It appeared that she had many anxieties. When I explained how the Bible helps us maintain peace of mind, she readily agreed and thanked me. This has renewed my appreciation for the power of the Scriptures to move people’s hearts.”

“There are many religions,” said one man, “but you are the only people who come to us, even in this abnormal time.” Another man remarked with respect, “It is amazing that you continue your activity as usual during this crisis.” One elder commented: “Many welcomed our visits. They said, ‘You are the first ones to come to our home since the disaster. Please come again.’”

# NEW WORLD TRANSLATION IN 106 LANGUAGES!



Friday, July 15, 2011, was a memorable day in Latvia and Lithuania and was a milestone in the history of God's people there. In a talk that was tied in to both countries, Stephen Lett of the Governing Body released the *New World Translation of the Christian Greek Scriptures* in Latvian and Lithuanian,



**Lithuanian and Latvian translations**

which marked the 99th and 100th languages in which this translation is available. For the past seven years, the Governing Body has given high priority to Bible translation. As a result, the *New World Translation* is now published in twice as many languages as in 2004, and translators around the world continue working hard to

translate the Bible into even more languages.

As you can imagine, the brothers receive the Bible in their own language with great enthusiasm. "Possessing a Bible is one thing," said a brother from the Central African Republic, "but understanding it in your mother tongue is one of the best things in

the world. The *New World Translation* in Sango speaks right to the heart. When I read the Gospels, I can now see the images of Bible characters and understand their feelings.” A young Ethiopian sister summed up the sentiments of many when she said: “The words ‘thank you’ can hardly express what I feel in my heart. I always used to pray to Jehovah to give us the *New World Translation* in our language. Today, he has given it to me!”

**“The words ‘thank you’  
can hardly express  
what I feel in my heart”**

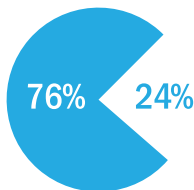


## Complete New World Translation: 62

Afrikaans	Lingala
Albanian	Macedonian
Arabic	Malagasy
Armenian	Maltese
Bulgarian	Norwegian
Cebuano	Ossetian
Chichewa	Polish
Chinese (Simplified)	Portuguese
Chinese (Traditional)	Romanian
Cibemba	Russian
Croatian	Samoan
Czech	Sepedi
Danish	Serbian
Dutch	Serbian (Roman)
Efik	Sesotho
English	Shona
Finnish	Sinhala
French	Slovak
Georgian	Slovenian
German	Spanish
Greek	Swahili
Hungarian	Swedish
Igbo	Tagalog
Illoko	Tsonga
Indonesian	Tswana
Italian	Turkish
Japanese	Twi (Akuapem)
Kinyarwanda	Twi (Asante)
Kirghiz	Xhosa
Kirundi	Yoruba
Korean	Zulu

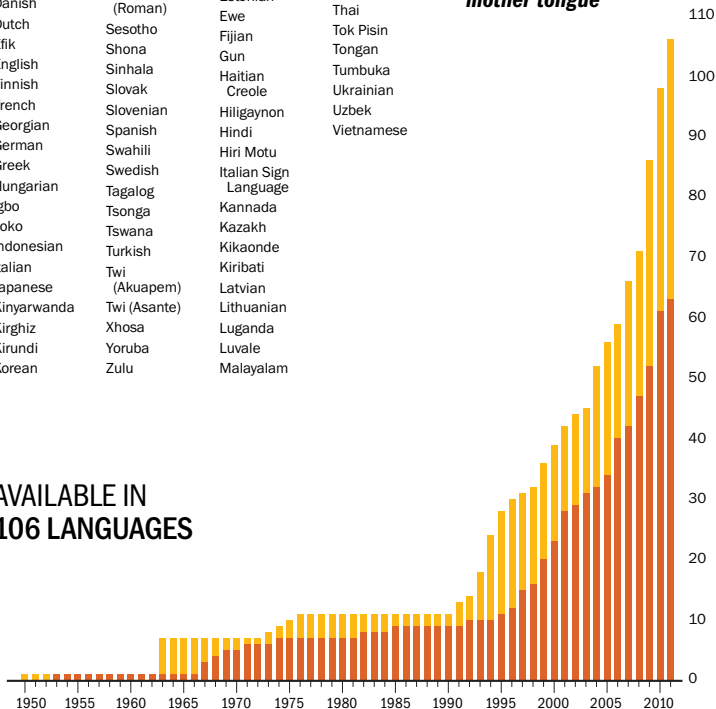
## Christian Greek Scriptures: 44

American Sign Language	Mexican Sign Language
Amharic	Myanmar
Azerbaijani	Nepali
Azerbaijani (Cyrillic)	Pangasinan
Brazilian Sign Language	Papiamentu (Curaçao)
Cambodian	Punjabi
Chitonga	Russian Sign Language
Colombian Sign Language	Sango
Estonian	Siloz
Ewe	Sranantongo
Fijian	Tamil
Gun	Thai
Haitian Creole	Tok Pisin
Hiligaynon	Tongan
Hindi	Tumbuka
Hiri Motu	Ukrainian
Italian Sign Language	Uzbek
Kannada	Vietnamese
Kazakh	
Kikaonde	
Kiribati	
Latvian	
Lithuanian	
Luganda	
Luvale	
Malayalam	



**By 2011, at least 76 percent of the world's population had the "New World Translation" (in whole or in part) in their mother tongue**

**AVAILABLE IN  
106 LANGUAGES**



# DISPATCHES

## NEWS FROM AROUND THE WORLD



**A Bully Silenced in Russia.** An elderly sister named Vera had problems for several years from one of her neighbors who did not like Jehovah's Witnesses. The man threatened her and used foul language in the presence of her grandchildren, who visited her frequently. Keeping in mind the words of Romans 12:18, Vera always reacted calmly and did not argue with him. In January 2011, the neighbor became especially aggressive. Fearing for her life, Vera contacted the local policeman, who, interestingly, had visited her home with a town official in March of 2010. They had come to see if she and the other Witnesses who met in her home were engaged in some form of extremist activity. This time, though, the policeman saw where the real problem was. He scolded the neighbor and fined him 3,000 rubles (about \$100 U.S.) for his threats. After that, she had no further problems with the neighbor. As a token of her appreciation, Vera wrote a letter of thanks to the police department. To her surprise, she received a reply from the police chief. He thanked her for her kind words about the officer who had helped her. He also wrote: "Your warm words, expressed against the backdrop of the prevailing negative view of the police in general today, demonstrate a trust on your part." Vera says that the local policeman now checks in on her regularly to make sure that everything is all right.

**The “Garbageman” in Turkey.** Two people who had recently begun to study the Bible attended the district convention. They wrote: “It was like a fairy tale for us. Everyone was smiling and was so friendly and polite. During the noon break, we walked around and did not feel that we were outsiders. Then the brother who had started the Bible study with us approached. He had a garbage bag in his hand. We tried to avoid him because we thought his occupation was collecting garbage, and we did not want to be recognized as friends of a lowly garbageman. So we turned away and tried to disappear among the crowd. We thought, ‘Why are we studying the Bible with a garbageman instead of with someone who gives talks on the platform?’

“However, as our study progressed, we learned that the ‘garbageman’ who conducted our study was a member of the Branch Committee and served at the branch office of Jehovah’s Witnesses. We continued to make progress and dedicated our lives to Jehovah, coming to understand that our brother was humbly conducting himself as ‘a lesser one.’ (Luke 9:48) How much we appreciate the valuable lesson that we learned at the first large meeting we attended!”

**Lies in Armenia.** A widespread slander campaign against Jehovah’s Witnesses started in the media after a young man who murdered his parents in the city of Sevan was falsely said to be one of Jehovah’s Witnesses. A statement refuting the claim was immediately distributed to the media. Nevertheless, the slander continued, and a special report was aired on television insisting that the young man was one of Jehovah’s Witnesses. Offensive and demeaning language was used when speaking of Jehovah’s Witnesses, and a caption during the program read “Jeho-

vah's Cruel and Weak-Willed Executioners.” It even encouraged viewers to use physical force against the Witnesses when they visited. As a result, there was a noticeable increase in animosity toward Jehovah’s Witnesses in the country. A claim was filed against the television station, demanding a retraction of the misinformation, an apology, and compensation for defaming our good name and reputation. By the time that the *2012 Yearbook* went to print, the television station had not yet made a retraction, though negotiations were under way to achieve a friendly settlement.

**The Future Engineers of Venezuela.** A group of children on their way to kindergarten would pass by a Kingdom Hall construction site every morning in the town of San José de Guaribe. They would always stop and watch for a while, fascinated by all that was going on. One day in class, their teacher asked them what they wanted to be when they grew up. To her surprise, not one, but several, answered that they wanted to be “engineers like Jehovah’s Witnesses”! Curious, she and another teacher decided to take the whole class on an outing to the construction site. When they arrived, the construction crew gave their visitors a tour of the site. The children enjoyed it immensely, especially because they were allowed to wear the colorful hard hats. The teachers had many questions, and a good witness was given.





**Canada Steps Up Magazine Production.** In order to make the best use of dedicated resources, the Governing Body asked the Canada branch to supply *The Watchtower* and *Awake!* to all congregations in Bermuda, Guyana, Canada, the United States, and most of the islands of the Caribbean. Therefore, at the start of the 2011 service year, the Canada branch took on a twelvefold increase in magazine production. Canada now prints magazines in 30 languages, amounting to nearly a quarter of all the magazines produced worldwide.

**Open House in Finland.** With the permission of the Governing Body, a special campaign was organized, focusing on Jehovah's Witnesses and the message they have proclaimed in Finland for a century. The brothers zealously distributed the *Awake!* magazine of August 2010 featuring the cover series "Jehovah's Witnesses—Who Are They?" This resulted in many fine conversations about our work. Then, at the end of August, the brothers organized an open house at the branch office. The entire Bethel family participated in explaining the work done there. Exhibits were set up to inform visitors about our work. Some Bethelites also donned historical dress and demonstrated how sandwich-signs were used to advertise public talks given in the 1940's and 1950's. Several departments had prepared small souvenirs for the visitors. About 1,500 visitors attended the open house. Subsequently, newspapers, radio, and TV reported favorably on our activities.

**Unrest in Côte d'Ivoire.** The 2011 service year began with optimism and promise of further growth, as evidenced by the 23,019 Bible studies being conduct-

ed by the 8,656 publishers. However, by late November 2010, election disputes plunged the country into chaos and civil unrest. The ensuing battle reached the commercial capital of Abidjan by March and extended into April 2011, causing a mass exodus of civilians from the city and even from the country. Among them were many of our brothers, who fled on foot and left behind home and possessions.

Throughout this difficult period, our brothers' neutral stand often served as a protection. On one occasion, soldiers entered a grade school where teachers and counselors were holding a seminar. All were ordered to lie down on the floor and to hand over their valuables. When a brother handed them his service bag full of our publications, the soldiers immediately identified him as one of Jehovah's Witnesses. They returned the bag along with his money and his cell phone, stating: "You are no threat to us."

***Historical marker by Yankee Stadium, New York, U.S.A.***



# BRANCH DEDICATIONS BRING GLORY TO GOD



On December 18, 2006, construction began on the **Chile** branch to expand it to include a new two-story office building, a new three-story residence, and a sizable addition to warehouse space. On October 16, 2010, there were 5,501 present at the dedication program, in which David Splane of the Governing Body gave the discourse in Spanish.

On February 19, 2011, there were 210 present at the dedication of the expanded country office in **Burkina Faso**. The dedication discourse was delivered by John Kikot, from world headquarters. The preaching work here was supervised by the Côte d'Ivoire branch

*Burkina Faso office*



*Chile branch*



◀ **Construction workers at the Burkina Faso office**

until May 2011 when Burkina Faso came under the oversight of the Benin branch. The fine conduct on the construction site brought much praise to Jehovah's name. "There was no yelling," remarked an employee of a large supply company. "We have never worked on a construction project with people as calm and happy as on this one."

There was much rejoicing when the new facilities of the **Hong Kong** branch were dedicated on August 27, 2011. The new offices are on the 19th floor of a 37-story building overlooking Victoria Harbor. (See arrow below.) Stephen Lett of the Governing Body gave the dedication talk to an enthusiastic crowd of 290 seated in the dining room, offices, and shipping area. The new office space provides welcome relief for the Translation, Service, Audio/Video, Purchasing, Shipping, and Accounting departments.

***New branch facilities in Hong Kong***



## LEGAL REPORT



***European Court  
of Human Rights,  
Strasbourg, France***

The faithful prophet Jeremiah had good reason to trust that Almighty God would never abandon him. “They will certainly fight against you,” Jehovah said, “but they will not prevail over you. For I am with you, to save you and to deliver you.” (Jer. 15:20) As the following reports show, Jehovah’s modern-day servants have likewise experienced his backing and support as they carry out their preaching commission even in the face of opposition.—Matt. 24:9; 28:19, 20.

**Armenia** Vahan Bayatyan, one of Jehovah’s Witnesses, was sentenced to two and a half years in prison because of his conscientious objection to military service. After he lost his lawsuits and appeals before Armenian courts, his case was heard by the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR). On October 27, 2009, seven judges of the ECHR passed judgment against Brother Bayatyan and in favor of Armenia. However, a dissenting judge found the Court’s decision “incompatible with current European standards on the question of conscientious objection.” In view of the significance of this issue, the ECHR therefore agreed to refer the case to its Grand Chamber, consisting of 17 judges.

On July 7, 2011, the 17-judge panel, by a majority of 16 votes to one, decided that Armenia had violated Brother Bayatyan's right of freedom of conscience. The Court noted that it "has no reason to doubt that the applicant's objection to military service was motivated by his religious beliefs, which were genuinely held and were in serious and insurmountable conflict with his obligation to perform military service." This landmark judgment will hopefully lead to the eventual release of 69 brothers imprisoned in Armenia, as well as brothers facing the same issue in Azerbaijan and Turkey.\*

**Bulgaria** On April 17, 2011, more than 100 people, including women, children, and elderly ones, were peacefully observing the Memorial of Christ's death at a Kingdom Hall in Burgas. Outside, an angry mob of about 60 men gathered and started throwing large stones at the Witnesses who were standing at the entrance. The mob then stormed the Kingdom Hall, but

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\* Of the 49 cases considered by the ECHR since 1965 involving Jehovah's Witnesses, the Court returned a positive outcome in all but 2 cases. This recent victory involving Brother Bayatyan reverses one of those two losses.



the brothers prevented them from getting in. The police were called immediately, but they were slow to respond. A number of Witnesses were injured in the attack, and five had to be taken by ambulance to the hospital. In spite of the assault, the congregation proceeded with the Memorial observance. The attack was uncharacteristic of the respectful way that Jehovah's Witnesses are generally treated in Bulgaria and has actually resulted in positive publicity. The Governing Body arranged for 13 branches to bring the attack to the attention of the Bulgarian embassies in their respective countries. Since then, the Bulgarian government has condemned the attack, and the local prosecutor has brought charges against eight of the perpetrators.

**South Korea** More than 800 of Jehovah's Witnesses are still imprisoned in South Korea for their conscientious refusal of military service, based on religious grounds. Since 1950, more than 16,000 of Jehovah's Witnesses have been sentenced to over 31,000 years in prison for refusing to perform military service. Why have so many young men taken such an uncompromising stand?

Each young man who refuses to do military service makes a personal conscientious decision. For instance, Kim Ji-Gwan explained at his trial: "I was deeply moved by such Bible teachings as 'people will learn war no more' and 'love your neighbor as yourself.' I also learned that principled love can motivate us to love our enemies. Based on these and other scriptures and as a result of my firm personal convictions, I made the decision to refuse military service."—Isa. 2:4; Matt. 5:43, 44; 22:36-39.



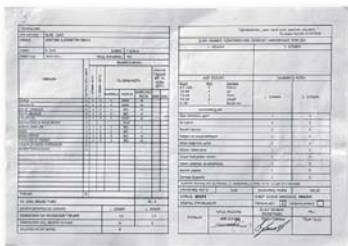
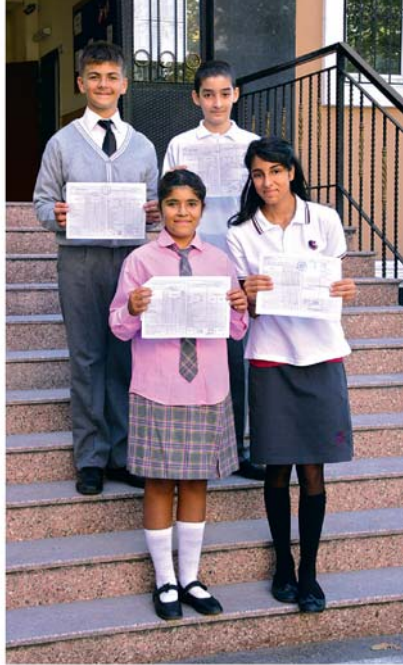
Presently, young men in South Korea are given no option to perform alternative civilian service. In an effort to resolve this issue, ten cases were appealed to Korea's Constitutional Court. On November 11, 2010, the court heard oral arguments, including whether Korea's failure to implement an alternative arrangement for conscientious objectors is a violation of the rights of Korea's citizens.

In the meantime, on March 24, 2011, the United Nations Human Rights Committee (UNHRC) ruled that South Korea violated internationally recognized standards of human rights when it imprisoned 100 conscientious objectors who are Jehovah's Witnesses. (These 100 brothers had appealed to the UNHRC for having been imprisoned.) In addition, the favorable judgment in Brother Bayatyan's case by the Grand Chamber of the ECHR (see the Armenia report on pages 34-35) was submitted to Korea's Constitutional Court for consideration in the pending decision on the consolidated ten cases. Even so, on August 30, 2011, the Constitutional Court, in total disregard of the decisions by the UNHRC, upheld the Military Service Law and the continued imprisonment of conscientious objectors. Observing that there is a conflict between the Military Service Law and the constitution's recognition of freedom of conscience, two of the nine justices dissented and called for a system of alternative civilian service.

**Turkey** On July 31, 2007, our brothers here rejoiced to receive legal recognition as a religious association. Although there are still challenges concerning the neutrality issue and the use of our Kingdom

Halls, theocratic interests continue to advance in this land. On April 26, 2011, the Ministry of National Education for the Turkish Republic sent out an official directive stating that ‘Jehovah’s Witnesses can be exempted from mandatory religion classes in school.’ The Ministry reasoned that “although Jehovah’s Witnesses do not accept some common beliefs of Christianity—Jehovah’s Witnesses are a Christian religion.” This decision is welcome news to our young brothers and sisters who have received failing grades in school over the years for refusing to participate in religion classes.

**United States** In May 2011, the Kansas Court of Appeals rendered a favorable decision in the case of *Mary D. Stinemetz v. Kansas Health Policy Authority*. The court ruled that the state’s refusal to



**Students holding their school report cards. They are happy because of being exempted from religion class**

authorize Sister Stinemetz's out-of-state bloodless surgery violated her federal and state constitutional rights. Since the type of bloodless surgery the sister required was not available in Kansas, the court ordered the state to authorize our sister's out-of-state surgery. This is a victory not only for Sister Stinemetz but also for other publishers in the United States who receive government-funded health care.

On August 10, 2011, the Supreme Court of Kansas upheld a favorable decision granting Monica McGlory, one of Jehovah's Witnesses, custody of her son. The child's father had sought custody, claiming that Sister McGlory should not have custody of their son because (1) she would refuse to consent to a blood transfusion, (2) she took the child with her in the door-to-door ministry, and (3) she allegedly alienated him from his father and his community by teaching their son about Armageddon.

The Kansas Supreme Court affirmed constitutional principles already set out in 1957, when it stated: "Religious freedom, as guaranteed by our constitution, should be faithfully upheld, and religious teachings to children should not and must not be considered as basis for making child custody orders." With regard to the blood transfusion issue, the court stated: "We cannot decide [custody] cases based on some hypothetical future accident or illness which might necessitate [a blood transfusion]."

**France** There was much rejoicing on June 30, 2011, when the ECHR issued a decision in favor of the Association of Jehovah's Witnesses of France. This was the culmination of a 16-year legal struggle arising

from an exorbitant and controversial 60 percent tax that had been imposed on donations to the branch. The Witnesses are the only major religious organization that has been taxed in this manner. In total, the government of France sought to obligate Jehovah's Witnesses to pay 58 million euros (over \$82,000,000 U.S.), a sum that far exceeds the assets of the Association. After courts in France at every level affirmed the tax, the matter was appealed to the ECHR in February 2005.

On June 30, 2011, the seven justices of the ECHR unanimously stated that if upheld, France's actions would directly prevent Jehovah's Witnesses from freely practicing their religion. The Court confirmed that the protections afforded by the European Convention on Human Rights apply to Jehovah's Witnesses. This far-reaching precedent will be a valuable tool in the pursuit of freedom of worship in other lands under the jurisdiction of the ECHR, such as Armenia, Bulgaria, Georgia, and Russia. Also significant is the fact that for the first time, the government of France has been found guilty of violating the European Convention's freedom of religion clause. The French government did not appeal the decision.

**Russia** On June 10, 2010, Jehovah's Witnesses were granted a historic legal victory against the Russian government by the ECHR in the case *Jehovah's Witnesses of Moscow v. Russia*. Although the Russian government requested a referral to the 17-judge Grand Chamber of the Court, on December 13, 2010, the panel of the Grand Chamber rejected the government's request, thus making the



June 10 judgment final. That judgment stated that the Russian govern-

***Witnesses preaching in  
Gorno-Altaysk, Republic of Altay***

ment “has a legal obligation . . . to put an end to the violation found by the Court and to redress so far as possible the effects.” To date, however, the government has failed to implement this ruling. Instead, it has found new ways to harass and obstruct the Witnesses’ free exercise of their religion.

For example, in the early morning of August 25, 2011, police raided 19 of our brothers’ homes in the city of Taganrog and confiscated religious literature, computers, and congregation records. Those raids seem to be connected to an earlier ruling by the Russian Federation Supreme Court that the local religious organization in Taganrog be liquidated and that 34 of our publications be declared extremist. Based on decisions in Russian courts, the government has placed 63 of our publications on the Federal List of Extremist Materials.

In addition, our brothers and sisters have been the victims of at least 950 raids, assaults, arrests, and police detentions. The Russian authorities have opened 11 criminal cases against our brothers, and many Kingdom Halls have been vandalized. The authorities even installed surveillance cameras in the home of at least one family and tapped telephone lines and monitored e-mail accounts of many others in an effort to trump up criminal charges under the antiextremism law.

One of the cases of trumped-up charges involves 35-year-old Aleksandr Kalistratov, in the city of Gorno-Altaysk, who was accused of “inciting religious hatred or enmity” under an antiextremism law that has been widely criticized by human rights defenders. During the court proceedings, which lasted from October 7, 2010, through March 18, 2011, none of the 71 court witnesses who were cross-examined could establish any criminal action—or even intent—on the part of Aleksandr. The court thoroughly studied the literature and teachings of Jehovah’s Witnesses, and on April 14, 2011, the judge issued a verdict of not guilty. The prosecutor, however, appealed this decision, and on May 26, 2011, the Supreme Court of the Altay Republic decided to send the case back to the lower court for a rehearing with a new judge. Thus Brother Kalistratov, after having been completely exonerated, faces an entirely new round of court hearings that could still lead to his being wrongfully declared an extremist.

Naturally, such a case involving supposed dangerous activity has drawn significant public attention to

our work in the small city of Gorno-Altaysk. How have the local Witnesses, who are also at risk of prosecution, fared under these circumstances?

“During this challenging time, the Bible has become more precious,” says a sister named Inna. “My brothers and sisters are more like family, and I feel closer to Jehovah than ever before!” Although some of our publications have been banned, many studies have been started using only the Bible. The number of publishers in the Altay Republic has grown by 24 percent. The Witnesses have spent 33 percent more hours in the field ministry. Attendance at the Memorial was 16 percent higher than last year and amounted to twice the number of publishers in the entire republic!

In the meantime, Jehovah’s Witnesses in Russia have filed 13 new applications with the ECHR against the Russian government. One of the applications contests the Supreme Court decision of December 8, 2009, and another contests the decision of the Supreme Court of the Altay Republic that declared 18 of our publications to be extremist.

### **“CRY OUT JOYFULLY”**

THIS world under Satan’s angry control is experiencing increasing woe. (Rev. 12:12) In stark contrast, Jehovah’s servants “cry out joyfully because of the good condition of the heart.” (Isa. 65:13, 14) Without letup, they continue to invite as many as possible to worship the true God, knowing that “all those taking refuge in [Jehovah] will rejoice; to time indefinite they will cry out joyfully.”—Ps. 5:11.



# 2011 SERVICE YEAR REPORT OF

Letter and number following each country's name indicates

Country or Territory	Population	2011 Peak Pubs.	Ratio, 1 Pub- lisher to	2011 Av. Pubs.	% Inc. Over 2010
Albania (D-11)	3,204,000	4,497	712	4,412	5
American Samoa (N-26)	68,000	212	321	201	-3
Andorra (F-4)	85,000	175	486	164	-4
Angola (N-6)	19,082,000	83,649	228	79,960	7
Anguilla (O-32)	15,000	63	238	58	2
Antigua (P-32)	89,000	519	171	485	4
Argentina (N-36)	40,412,000	143,379	282	141,301	1
Armenia (G-9)	3,250,000	11,115	292	11,010	2
Aruba (Q-29)	107,000	895	120	830	7
Australia (O-19)	22,573,000	66,107	341	64,498	1
Austria (F-5)	8,361,475	20,934	399	20,792	
Azerbaijan (G-9)	9,188,000	1,019	9,017	963	7
Azores (G-1)	245,629	762	322	749	1
Bahamas (G-35)	353,658	1,712	207	1,616	1
Bangladesh (J-14)	148,692,000	151	984,715	140	5
Barbados (Q-33)	273,000	2,556	107	2,492	-1
Belarus (E-7)	9,467,600	4,892	1,935	4,769	3
Belgium (E-4)	10,924,468	25,150	434	23,942	1
Belize (H-33)	317,000	2,322	137	2,151	5
Benin (L-4)	8,850,000	10,936	809	10,205	5
Bermuda (F-36)	65,071	513	127	457	4
Bolivia (M-36)	9,929,849	21,381	464	20,770	4
Bonaire (Q-30)	16,198	104	156	94	6
Bosnia and Herzegovina (C-10)	3,760,000	1,224	3,072	1,199	1
Botswana (O-6)	2,007,000	1,992	1,008	1,936	2
Brazil (L-37)	194,946,000	742,425	263	720,896	2
Britain (E-3)	60,309,653	135,823	444	130,808	1
Bulgaria (F-7)	7,494,000	1,896	3,953	1,834	6
Burkina Faso (K-3)	16,469,000	1,520	10,835	1,425	4
Burundi (M-7)	8,383,000	10,551	795	9,852	7
Cambodia (K-16)	14,138,000	498	28,390	462	16
Cameroon (L-5)	20,042,400	36,424	550	35,222	3
Canada (C-31)	34,017,000	113,989	298	111,970	1
Cape Verde (K-1)	496,000	1,903	261	1,865	1
Cayman Islands (H-34)	51,384	233	221	222	-1
Central African Republic (L-6)	4,401,000	2,559	1,720	2,472	
Chad (K-6)	11,227,000	633	17,736	583	-1
Chile (M-35)	17,248,450	74,157	233	71,128	2
Chuuk (L-21)	48,651	47	1,035	43	2
Colombia (J-35)	46,927,000	152,250	308	148,767	3
Congo, Dem. Republic of (M-6)	67,800,000	173,416	391	161,298	6
Congo, Republic of (M-5)	4,141,000	5,555	745	5,312	2
Cook Islands (O-26)	15,600	184	85	177	2
Costa Rica (J-34)	4,728,000	27,199	174	26,264	4
Côte d'Ivoire (L-3)	20,185,000	9,146	2,207	8,483	1
Croatia (B-9)	4,403,000	5,612	785	5,556	
Cuba (G-34)	11,240,841	94,001	120	93,254	2
Curaçao (Q-30)	145,406	1,837	79	1,757	3
Cyprus (H-7)	885,600	2,439	363	2,403	3

# JEHOVAH'S WITNESSES WORLDWIDE

the country's location on maps following this chart.

2010 Av. Pubs.	2011 No. Bptzd.	Av. Aux. Pio. Pubs.	Av. Pubs.	No. of Cong.	Total Hours	Av. Bible Studies	Memorial Attend- ance
4,217	247	462	1,008	73	1,694,230	6,289	11,863
208	18	20	25	3	55,581	338	876
171	1	12	15	3	34,513	105	352
74,877	5,174	4,206	8,369	1,137	20,267,894	303,460	352,727
57		3	8	2	14,469	97	278
466	26	35	44	7	104,583	577	1,419
139,372	5,139	11,804	15,779	1,944	33,406,539	132,866	310,875
10,763	490	991	2,239	130	3,568,924	8,804	24,494
774	35	53	52	11	153,686	919	2,754
63,951	1,230	3,761	4,402	797	11,232,627	27,001	118,624
20,741	385	1,129	1,224	294	3,601,083	11,040	35,584
900	31	111	211	9	366,141	1,650	2,463
738	22	40	73	15	165,538	932	1,853
1,604	57	117	169	27	375,270	2,088	4,609
133	12	7	30	3	44,522	256	531
2,507	70	176	182	30	457,085	2,337	6,623
4,652	180	473	774	65	1,455,658	3,997	9,038
23,724	417	1,302	1,346	371	3,774,093	9,748	44,554
2,041	69	141	351	49	622,767	3,614	8,599
9,704	517	733	1,233	166	2,795,576	22,876	38,108
441	8	31	68	5	112,672	331	1,121
19,945	984	2,073	3,018	254	6,206,873	32,679	71,665
89	6	7	10	2	23,664	141	329
1,188	48	104	211	17	374,116	731	2,364
1,896	132	143	178	44	454,045	3,506	6,208
706,699	27,425	41,582	64,013	10,926	145,889,031	801,007	1,748,226
129,230	2,739	7,870	10,329	1,537	22,623,263	56,794	229,286
1,737	78	118	402	41	626,206	2,313	5,084
1,365	55	99	206	36	437,228	2,854	4,894
9,210	765	788	1,354	202	3,268,745	27,087	44,330
398	38	29	232	9	250,259	1,426	1,769
34,220	2,016	2,030	2,916	331	7,991,037	64,829	96,981
111,193	1,897	7,596	10,330	1,358	22,211,362	48,863	192,006
1,847	88	119	326	35	541,794	4,039	8,359
224	13	19	27	3	52,654	211	702
2,482	117	135	254	53	616,983	5,571	16,989
587	16	29	64	17	156,263	953	4,472
69,514	2,703	6,145	8,190	834	17,241,349	66,402	178,624
42	6	1	14	3	20,008	147	169
144,176	7,121	8,345	18,572	2,359	35,210,815	222,491	489,053
151,842	11,593	7,227	14,009	3,181	36,892,205	434,067	1,043,418
5,215	326	311	343	74	1,310,835	17,482	28,145
173	1	10	18	3	39,268	200	555
25,141	1,091	1,623	2,128	406	5,335,990	34,303	69,826
8,426	412	545	1,188	199	2,518,468	21,913	31,546
5,534	167	380	473	67	1,188,861	2,558	9,954
91,593	3,680	7,536	7,301	1,289	18,721,994	169,282	236,584
1,705	49	108	126	22	316,585	2,004	5,211
2,322	59	157	254	35	525,953	1,604	5,043

Country or Territory	Population	2011 Peak Pubs.	Ratio, 1 Pub- lisher to	2011 Av. Pubs.	% Inc. Over 2010
Czech Republic (E-5)	10,492,960	15,534	675	15,363	
Denmark (D-4)	5,550,000	14,450	384	14,171	1
Dominica (P-33)	68,000	447	152	425	4
Dominican Republic (O-29)	9,927,000	34,643	287	32,876	5
East Timor (N-18)	1,159,000	197	5,883	178	20
Ecuador (K-34)	14,861,000	75,936	196	73,500	5
El Salvador (H-33)	6,218,000	38,005	164	37,081	4
Equatorial Guinea (L-5)	720,400	1,506	478	1,284	7
Estonia (D-6)	1,340,194	4,254	315	4,179	-1
Ethiopia (L-8)	82,950,000	9,212	9,005	9,079	4
Faeroe Islands (C-2)	49,000	124	395	121	-1
Falkland Islands (Q-37)	3,440	12	287	10	100
Fiji (N-24)	869,000	2,854	304	2,667	5
Finland (C-7)	5,375,276	18,964	283	18,851	
France (F-4)	62,787,000	123,277	509	120,172	1
French Guiana (J-37)	231,000	2,112	109	2,079	3
Gabon (M-5)	1,535,200	3,732	411	3,504	1
Gambia (K-2)	1,728,000	206	8,388	188	1
Georgia (G-9)	4,352,000	18,035	241	17,180	-5
Germany (E-5)	81,751,602	165,387	494	162,894	
Ghana (L-3)	24,977,408	109,772	228	104,718	4
Gibraltar (G-3)	29,000	115	252	111	8
Greece (G-6)	10,787,690	29,143	370	29,006	
Greenland (A-38)	57,000	160	356	155	-7
Grenada (Q-32)	104,000	590	176	555	1
Guadeloupe (P-32)	461,000	8,475	54	8,311	1
Guam (K-20)	180,000	779	231	738	3
Guatemala (H-33)	14,744,000	31,637	466	30,512	6
Guinea (K-2)	10,237,000	709	14,439	670	3
Guinea-Bissau (K-2)	1,515,000	129	11,744	120	2
Guyana (J-37)	754,000	2,712	278	2,562	3
Haiti (O-28)	9,993,000	17,954	557	16,412	8
Honduras (H-33)	7,743,000	19,944	388	19,482	5
Hong Kong (J-17)	7,053,000	5,307	1,329	5,126	2
Hungary (A-10)	9,984,000	23,300	428	22,740	
Iceland (B-1)	320,000	350	914	342	1
India (J-12)	1,224,614,000	37,095	33,013	33,182	5
Indonesia (M-17)	237,600,000	22,594	10,516	22,296	3
Ireland (E-2)	4,470,000	6,006	744	5,817	2
Israel (H-8)	7,590,000	1,342	5,656	1,312	-2
Italy (G-5)	60,845,000	245,657	248	243,454	1
Jamaica (H-34)	2,705,800	12,233	221	11,866	1
Japan (G-19)	126,536,000	218,057	580	217,352	
Kazakhstan (F-11)	16,574,000	17,641	940	17,216	2
Kenya (M-8)	41,610,000	24,926	1,669	23,510	3
Kiribati (M-24)	101,000	124	815	114	3
Korea, Republic of (G-18)	48,184,000	99,933	482	99,103	1
Kosovo (D-11)	2,350,000	216	10,880	197	9
Kosrae (L-22)	6,616	20	331	16	-6
Kyrgyzstan (G-12)	5,400,000	5,013	1,077	4,760	3
Latvia (D-6)	2,200,000	2,414	911	2,337	
Lebanon (H-8)	4,228,000	3,619	1,168	3,558	
Lesotho (P-7)	2,171,000	3,817	569	3,671	5
Liberia (L-2)	3,994,122	5,993	666	5,598	3
Liechtenstein (F-4)	36,157	87	416	81	31

2010 Av. Pubs.	2011 No. Bptzd.	Av. Aux. Pio. Pubs.	Av. Pio. Pubs.	No. of Cong.	Total Hours	Av. Bible Studies	Memorial Atten- dance
15,337	274	844	761	234	2,424,600	6,646	27,006
14,085	249	813	741	197	2,237,467	4,985	22,062
409	9	31	57	10	113,930	738	1,432
31,385	1,780	2,930	5,731	445	10,185,318	68,303	136,062
148	18	12	37	3	60,835	319	595
70,055	4,214	5,529	11,461	923	20,078,845	135,869	246,242
35,749	1,415	2,513	2,838	673	7,741,066	44,447	96,002
1,205	109	118	167	12	384,770	4,038	5,243
4,203	112	262	458	54	857,392	2,783	7,351
8,729	533	858	1,695	191	3,089,038	7,126	25,368
122	1	8	27	4	31,790	68	164
5		1		1	1,512	10	34
2,549	121	223	317	68	663,513	4,603	11,466
18,870	224	969	1,798	302	3,056,668	10,718	26,950
118,848	2,202	8,431	11,973	1,563	25,551,965	53,107	215,162
2,028	106	183	203	34	543,441	4,328	8,655
3,476	242	270	422	31	1,042,407	8,598	11,581
186	3	17	32	4	62,173	375	672
18,021	808	1,145	2,521	191	4,169,377	9,193	33,438
162,611	2,827	8,310	10,312	2,228	27,476,907	75,198	272,867
100,334	5,282	5,117	8,687	1,537	24,024,400	316,349	311,321
103	4	9	10	2	22,463	39	181
28,879	666	1,802	3,381	380	6,147,211	13,300	50,568
166	3	10	32	6	38,234	138	341
551	13	38	58	9	128,678	642	1,750
8,243	240	571	545	136	1,583,362	9,269	21,952
718	9	48	130	8	200,519	980	2,112
28,809	1,179	1,982	3,362	496	7,171,141	38,881	89,100
649	48	44	100	18	214,598	1,683	3,852
118	7	8	34	2	55,649	389	582
2,495	114	186	292	44	579,472	4,162	12,142
15,250	1,426	1,231	2,093	227	4,407,171	35,735	89,452
18,504	839	1,338	2,918	331	5,592,260	32,091	64,989
5,029	361	471	831	64	1,514,418	6,754	10,763
22,646	673	1,355	1,800	286	4,510,158	14,223	45,266
339	9	20	47	8	77,296	276	707
31,556	1,813	2,613	3,156	441	6,863,732	36,805	94,954
21,739	840	1,504	2,023	374	5,164,377	26,836	52,945
5,721	140	364	682	115	1,261,058	3,122	11,623
1,336	43	94	116	21	291,616	958	2,580
241,823	4,367	18,688	28,247	3,050	56,134,600	118,421	460,512
11,801	378	733	1,438	198	2,447,621	14,513	41,213
217,240	2,892	19,301	65,040	3,078	81,553,752	167,987	323,211
16,934	838	1,478	2,774	223	4,793,671	14,003	32,319
22,812	1,180	1,289	3,140	540	6,387,745	40,396	66,364
111	13	12	22	2	41,484	262	514
97,825	2,385	10,381	35,681	1,396	43,854,998	73,961	143,356
181	12	17	68	5	104,045	426	664
17	1	1	5	1	5,817	43	82
4,643	276	454	854	67	1,402,977	5,356	10,348
2,347	66	150	354	36	629,262	2,401	3,977
3,541	62	202	134	65	557,267	1,827	6,717
3,491	230	206	394	78	861,318	6,146	9,520
5,451	319	332	665	112	1,664,859	19,143	89,624
62		3	3	1	10,237	46	126

Country or Territory	Population	2011 Peak Pubs.	Ratio, 1 Pub- lisher to	2011 Av. Pubs.	% Inc. Over 2010
Lithuania (D-6)	3,210,761	3,102	1,035	3,027	1
Luxembourg (E-4)	586,340	2,097	280	2,034	2
Macao (J-17)	544,000	223	2,439	213	12
Macedonia (D-11)	2,061,000	1,358	1,518	1,334	1
Madagascar (O-9)	21,766,000	24,825	877	24,208	7
Madeira (H-1)	279,499	1,156	242	1,138	1
Malawi (N-8)	14,901,000	82,112	181	75,647	4
Malaysia (L-16)	28,859,000	3,964	7,280	3,874	7
Mali (K-3)	15,370,000	289	53,183	269	12
Malta (G-5)	417,000	578	721	565	1
Marshall Islands (L-23)	111,000	203	547	182	2
Martinique (P-32)	406,000	4,710	86	4,636	1
Mauritius (O-10)	1,248,129	1,718	727	1,703	-1
Mayotte (N-9)	204,000	81	2,519	72	13
Mexico (G-31)	114,658,000	739,954	155	724,690	4
Moldova (F-7)	4,088,600	20,384	201	20,053	1
Mongolia (F-15)	2,756,000	306	9,007	294	20
Montenegro (D-10)	631,490	246	2,567	237	7
Montserrat (P-32)	6,000	14	429	12	9
Mozambique (O-7)	23,391,000	51,214	457	45,684	3
Myanmar (J-15)	53,999,804	3,685	14,654	3,630	
Namibia (O-5)	2,283,000	1,838	1,242	1,791	1
Nauru (M-23)	10,000	15	667	13	8
Nepal (H-13)	29,425,990	1,557	18,899	1,493	14
Netherlands (E-4)	16,691,503	30,351	550	29,417	
Nevis (P-32)	12,355	56	221	53	-4
New Caledonia (O-23)	255,000	1,959	130	1,920	4
New Zealand (Q-24)	4,415,000	14,507	304	13,832	1
Nicaragua (H-33)	5,861,000	23,570	249	22,633	4
Niger (K-4)	15,512,000	319	48,627	289	2
Nigeria (L-4)	165,000,000	330,316	500	303,837	2
Niue (O-26)	1,400	29	48	24	-14
Norfolk Island (P-23)	2,151	10	215	9	13
Norway (C-4)	4,953,000	10,989	451	10,740	2
Pakistan (H-12)	173,593,000	1,022	169,856	897	2
Palau (L-19)	20,000	86	233	78	-9
Palestinian Territory (H-8)	4,144,000	64	64,750	59	100
Panama (J-34)	3,572,000	14,188	252	13,466	4
Papua New Guinea (M-20)	6,858,000	4,191	1,636	3,806	4
Paraguay (M-37)	7,065,950	8,955	789	8,557	2
Peru (L-35)	29,400,000	114,468	257	108,264	3
Philippines (K-18)	94,893,000	176,001	539	173,449	3
Pohnpei (L-22)	35,981	100	360	94	-4
Poland (E-6)	38,207,000	126,196	303	124,832	
Portugal (G-2)	9,951,163	49,606	201	48,966	
Puerto Rico (O-31)	3,749,000	26,546	141	25,814	1
Réunion (O-10)	846,000	2,916	290	2,857	2
Rodrigues (O-11)	37,922	39	972	37	
Romania (F-6)	21,436,000	39,953	537	39,635	1
Rota (K-20)	2,527	14	181	12	-14
Russia (C-15)	142,958,000	165,447	864	161,324	3
Rwanda (M-7)	11,000,000	20,509	536	19,041	9
Saba (O-32)	1,500	12	125	10	-23

2010 Av. Pubs.	2011 No. Bptzd.	Av. Aux. Pio. Pubs.	Av. Pio. Pubs.	No. of Cong.	Total Hours	Av. Bible Studies	Memorial Atten- dance
3,010	128	219	396	47	776,582	2,741	5,555
2,002	29	127	119	33	363,980	1,104	4,087
191	3	15	45	3	80,531	310	608
1,319	58	92	208	23	385,237	1,242	3,415
22,664	1,608	1,468	3,782	575	7,208,635	63,955	123,508
1,123	29	76	89	18	235,918	857	2,067
72,634	4,443	3,593	5,961	1,280	14,693,140	89,287	279,581
3,630	197	251	808	116	1,227,827	6,688	11,048
241	17	17	53	7	101,696	708	1,057
560	7	38	43	7	107,291	219	1,038
178	7	14	25	3	51,280	442	960
4,569	123	369	430	59	1,039,018	5,066	11,270
1,713	52	106	124	26	335,800	2,048	4,304
64	5	5	9	1	16,933	148	235
696,749	20,381	38,564	95,406	12,657	168,712,883	1,018,007	2,193,110
19,918	639	1,213	1,900	244	3,972,099	14,831	40,687
244	47	36	115	4	138,908	675	1,091
222	10	31	28	4	73,160	163	695
11			3	1	3,780	28	92
44,182	3,213	1,670	4,188	1,032	9,130,687	61,664	268,416
3,618	107	130	522	70	801,838	4,004	8,013
1,781	121	114	177	38	443,046	3,257	6,238
12	4	1	2	1	3,372	24	136
1,304	145	128	371	20	499,594	3,057	5,108
29,357	523	1,651	1,330	393	4,475,994	11,055	52,397
55		2	6	1	11,236	58	240
1,839	79	169	148	26	414,203	2,296	6,249
13,692	340	882	1,017	184	2,556,044	8,152	27,476
21,816	1,032	1,320	2,828	344	5,766,587	41,593	84,620
283	12	14	50	6	88,724	449	1,316
298,476	12,687	12,926	32,144	5,468	61,148,463	635,002	699,406
28		1	4	1	5,679	28	77
8		1		1	1,325	2	18
10,517	203	576	623	164	1,635,423	4,692	17,956
877	50	56	82	18	186,230	1,118	3,956
86	4	6	15	1	25,163	156	310
	5	4	1	2	7,768	44	130
12,980	372	959	1,617	282	3,281,717	20,202	46,934
3,672	190	206	363	60	814,004	4,937	28,189
8,378	365	513	1,135	163	2,161,381	11,327	20,389
105,082	4,817	8,504	24,013	1,255	34,540,995	184,898	330,793
169,096	8,586	10,099	29,474	3,091	38,937,919	188,220	541,214
98	1	9	16	1	30,100	204	293
125,193	2,275	6,674	7,193	1,814	17,679,223	49,542	213,284
48,732	1,043	3,342	3,173	645	9,410,502	28,322	99,540
25,524	681	1,749	2,850	329	5,438,186	17,249	59,299
2,810	53	223	240	33	623,630	2,185	6,246
37		2	5	1	8,859	45	117
39,270	1,109	2,132	3,208	535	7,334,700	24,668	86,297
14		1	3	1	5,021	39	54
157,365	5,709	12,433	27,205	2,407	46,199,451	124,889	291,310
17,548	1,769	1,777	3,364	446	7,357,947	49,250	87,010
13		1		1	1,305	20	42

Country or Territory	Population	2011 Peak Pubs.	Ratio, 1 Pub- lisher to	2011 Av. Pubs.	% Inc. Over 2010
Saint Eustatius (P-32)	3,500	25	140	21	11
Saint Helena (N-3)	4,000	114	35	110	1
Saint Kitts (O-32)	40,000	202	198	192	2
Saint Lucia (Q-33)	174,000	688	253	665	
Saint Maarten (O-32)	41,000	329	125	308	-3
Saint Pierre and Miquelon (D-37)	6,000	14	429	14	17
Saint Vincent & the Grenadines (Q-32)	109,000	381	286	347	3
Saipan (K-20)	48,220	262	184	217	8
Samoa (N-25)	184,000	417	441	399	1
San Marino (F-5)	32,000	200	160	193	-4
São Tomé and Príncipe (M-4)	165,000	613	269	588	5
Senegal (K-2)	12,434,000	1,139	10,917	1,100	2
Serbia (C-11)	8,118,146	3,830	2,120	3,810	
Seychelles (M-9)	87,440	338	259	321	7
Sierra Leone (L-2)	6,010,000	1,935	3,106	1,793	3
Slovakia (F-6)	5,440,078	11,315	481	11,181	
Slovenia (B-8)	2,030,000	2,008	1,011	1,987	1
Solomon Islands (M-22)	538,000	1,781	302	1,727	3
South Africa (P-6)	50,133,000	91,814	546	88,023	2
Spain (G-3)	46,077,000	111,928	412	107,405	1
Sri Lanka (L-13)	20,860,000	5,153	4,048	4,951	5
Sudan (K-7)	39,154,490	1,695	23,100	1,590	-6
Suriname (J-37)	524,143	2,520	208	2,464	1
Swaziland (P-7)	1,186,000	3,059	388	2,891	5
Sweden (B-6)	9,380,000	22,428	418	22,052	
Switzerland (F-4)	7,870,134	18,131	434	17,535	1
Tahiti (M-27)	271,000	2,656	102	2,523	8
Taiwan (J-17)	23,200,000	8,079	2,872	7,869	7
Tanzania (M-8)	44,841,000	16,012	2,800	14,036	3
Thailand (K-15)	69,122,000	3,423	20,193	3,351	7
Tinian (K-20)	3,136	16	196	15	7
Togo (L-4)	6,028,000	17,240	350	16,140	3
Tonga (O-25)	105,000	237	443	226	1
Trinidad & Tobago (R-33)	1,341,000	9,291	144	9,109	3
Turkey (G-8)	72,000,000	2,143	33,598	2,104	4
Turks and Caicos (N-29)	39,213	299	131	280	16
Tuvalu (M-24)	10,000	71	141	63	3
Uganda (L-7)	33,425,000	5,580	5,990	5,318	6
Ukraine (E-7)	45,687,000	150,887	303	148,509	1
United States of America (E-32)	313,089,333	1,200,572	261	1,145,723	3
Uruguay (O-37)	3,369,000	11,580	291	11,447	1
Vanuatu (N-23)	246,000	493	499	453	8
Venezuela (J-36)	28,980,000	124,482	233	120,533	5
Virgin Islands, British (O-31)	13,000	258	50	253	3
Virgin Islands, U.S. (O-31)	109,000	685	159	614	
Wallis & Futuna Islands (N-25)	14,000	65	215	60	-3
Yap (L-19)	11,376	26	438	24	14
Zambia (N-7)	13,458,309	161,974	83	152,135	3
Zimbabwe (O-7)	12,571,000	39,005	322	37,720	4
30 Other Lands		26,272		24,483	12.7
Grand Total (236 Lands)		7,659,019		7,395,672	2.4



2010 Av. Pubs.	2011 No. Bptzd.	Av. Aux. Pio. Pubs.	Av. Pio. Pubs.	No. of Cong.	Total Hours	Av. Bible Studies	Memorial Attendance
19		2	2	1	6,910	34	81
109		5		3	12,737	83	283
189	9	13	29	4	54,988	333	864
663	24	50	94	10	172,305	1,106	2,310
316	17	24	31	5	74,497	466	1,194
12		2	4	1	4,915	9	21
336	8	33	48	7	94,994	516	1,207
201	8	19	36	2	68,268	386	615
395	27	26	82	10	120,789	628	2,021
202	1	16	26	2	50,542	98	374
558	46	51	105	10	204,716	2,173	3,073
1,082	33	72	132	24	314,517	1,873	2,846
3,805	112	314	516	57	1,026,937	2,140	9,030
301	17	21	23	4	64,521	357	831
1,747	71	131	200	34	500,569	4,124	8,668
11,135	221	541	321	161	1,473,604	3,276	21,503
1,974	29	119	206	29	447,392	1,046	3,149
1,680	90	95	232	48	380,501	1,826	9,337
86,157	4,337	5,053	8,534	1,831	19,056,518	116,685	216,543
106,497	2,256	8,650	11,537	1,486	25,559,362	60,529	202,122
4,733	223	398	505	86	1,097,095	6,709	13,738
1,693	93	72	237	38	442,144	3,325	6,800
2,430	120	231	233	49	570,910	4,270	9,008
2,753	192	149	267	87	655,064	4,053	7,345
21,967	314	1,252	1,838	323	3,621,907	9,583	36,631
17,387	275	902	788	270	2,701,960	8,301	31,243
2,331	193	236	224	30	635,572	3,868	8,789
7,339	505	785	2,359	120	3,255,155	13,308	18,692
13,572	773	732	1,563	444	3,470,994	24,428	57,399
3,140	147	282	891	85	1,216,698	5,121	7,835
14		1	2	1	4,921	26	40
15,660	794	1,234	1,397	253	4,154,428	47,856	52,362
224	10	14	29	5	55,039	294	660
8,820	289	883	1,080	114	2,064,174	11,139	25,423
2,024	77	159	190	29	483,395	1,307	4,034
241	28	20	41	5	87,852	694	1,441
61	1	2	1	1	6,959	57	197
5,002	343	372	782	118	1,609,244	14,154	21,393
146,387	5,029	11,197	18,635	1,691	35,779,811	94,560	275,756
1,115,786	32,953	70,659	137,036	13,309	252,819,231	714,151	2,563,518
11,364	360	703	630	158	1,922,316	9,262	23,950
419	22	25	49	4	102,226	1,044	2,744
114,713	5,725	9,660	19,919	1,469	34,214,566	189,195	418,851
246		20	32	4	63,078	315	867
613	13	38	89	9	153,304	655	1,945
62	6	2	9	1	14,889	96	226
21	1	3	8	1	8,969	67	118
147,614	9,949	6,218	11,278	2,388	30,234,455	298,742	758,811
36,380	2,666	2,537	4,325	997	9,325,491	81,050	99,277
21,721	1,718	2,124	7,583	640	10,662,482	40,464	48,875
7,224,930	263,131	466,911	895,844	109,403	1,707,094,710	8,490,746	19,374,737







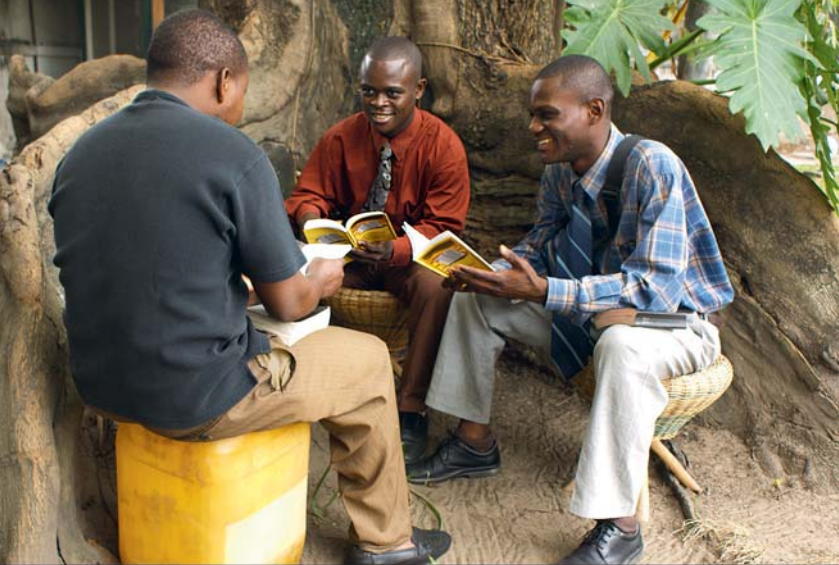


# 2011 Grand Totals

Branches of Jehovah's Witnesses:	98
Number of Lands Reporting:	236
Total Congregations:	109,403
Worldwide Memorial Attendance:	19,374,737
Memorial Partakers Worldwide:	11,824
Peak of Publishers in Kingdom Service:	7,659,019
Average Publishers Preaching Each Month:	7,395,672
Percentage of Increase Over 2010:	2.4
Total Number Baptized:	263,131
Average Auxiliary Pioneer Publishers Each Month:	466,911
Average Pioneer Publishers Each Month:	895,844
Total Hours Spent in Field:	1,707,094,710
Average Home Bible Studies Each Month:	8,490,746

During the 2011 service year, Jehovah's Witnesses spent over \$173 million in caring for special pioneers, missionaries, and traveling overseers in their field service assignments. ■ Worldwide, a total of 20,595 ordained ministers staff the branch facilities. All are members of the Worldwide Order of Special Full-Time Servants of Jehovah's Witnesses.





# Preaching and Teaching Earth Wide

**LONG ago, in a prophetic vision, the apostle John saw a vast and numberless crowd “out of all nations and tribes and peoples and tongues.” These people were identified as survivors of “the great tribulation” into God’s new world. (Rev. 7:9, 14) The figures and experiences in the pages that follow show not only that the great crowd is being gathered but also that it is growing ever larger. Does this not strengthen your faith in the certainty of Jehovah’s promises?**

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***Above: Conducting a Bible study in the Republic of the Congo  
(see page 59)***

# Africa

LANDS	57
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POPULATION	949,533,064
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PUBLISHERS	1,267,314
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BIBLE STUDIES	2,819,310
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**HER LETTER BROUGHT HIM COMFORT.** Iris, who resides in **South Africa**, writes letters of condolence to those who have lost a loved one in death. With her letters she encloses the tracts *All Suffering Soon to End!* and *What Hope for Dead Loved Ones?* Recently, she received a reply from a man named Sidney, who had lost his wife after a happy marriage of 38 years. “Although the medical specialists prepared me for the eventual death of my darling wife,” he wrote, “her passing has left me somewhat embittered, confused, uncertain, and very heartbroken. I need to thank the Lord for people like you. Your spending time and effort to tell total strangers of God’s promises is most definitely very noble, and your personal expression of faith will remain a treasure in my heart in the difficult period ahead. Reading your letter and tracts brought me my first signs of calmness and understanding.”

**ABORTION AVOIDED.** Gloria, a young sister in **Benin**, was witnessing to Arnaud, a university student, when his cell phone rang. Arnaud then excused himself saying that a friend needed his help. Gloria quickly reached into her bag, pulled out the first magazine she found, and gave it to him. Arnaud took it without looking and left.



Arnaud's friend had phoned to say that his girlfriend was pregnant and that he was thinking of forcing her to have an abortion. On the way to see him, Arnaud glanced at the magazine. "I couldn't believe my eyes when I saw the word 'abortion' on the cover," he later said. Gloria had handed him the June 2009 *Awake!* featuring the cover series "Abortion

—Why Is It Such an Issue?" After reading it, Arnaud's friend decided that abortion was no longer an option. His girlfriend later gave birth to a beautiful baby girl.

**THE WITCH DOCTOR WAS NOT TO BE FEARED.** King, a regular pioneer, moved to an area of **Zimbabwe** where the need is greater. While working with some sisters in field service, he approached the home of a well-known witch doctor. Though the sisters were hesitant to speak to this woman, King decided to offer her a home Bible study. When the witch doctor saw the publishers approaching, she assumed that they were clients and asked what they wanted. King showed her the book *What Does the Bible Really Teach?* and offered her a home Bible study. She accepted. "We were surprised to find that she had many questions," said King. "So we arranged to make a return visit and conduct the study." Three weeks later they invited her to a congregation meeting, and she came. She destroyed all her spiritistic items and made rapid spiritual progress. She was baptized a few months later.



**“PLEASE PRAY FOR THEM TO VISIT ME!”** Ten years ago Patrick decided to move from **Angola** to the United States. But he kept in touch with his mother, Felicidade, by phone. Recently, however, they were able to see each other by means of an Internet video call. While talking with her, he noticed someone in the room with her and asked who it was. Felicidade, who is one of Jehovah’s Witnesses, said: “It is a sister from my congregation, who came to visit me.”

Patrick responded: “Why don’t the Witnesses visit me? I have been here for ten years, and they haven’t called once. Please pray for them to visit me!”

A little bit surprised, Felicidade and the sister with her answered: “All right, we will pray for you.”

Just three days later, one of Jehovah’s Witnesses called at Patrick’s door. Patrick was so surprised that he asked his mother if she had arranged for someone in the United States to visit him. She had not. He concluded that the visit was an answer from God and accepted a Bible study. Immediately, he began attending all the meetings. The next time he saw his mother through a video call, he proudly showed her the chapter of the *Bible Teach* book that he was studying. He also told her that he had bought a suit to wear to the meetings.

**A PUZZLING BAPTISM REQUEST.** At the beginning of the 2010 district convention in Brazzaville, **Republic of the Congo**, a young man named Edvard said that he wanted to be baptized. When asked which congregation he came from, he replied: “Mossaka.” Since there were no Witnesses in that distant village, the brothers wondered how he had come to the point of wanting to be baptized.

Edvard explained to the elders that in 2007 his grandfather had studied the *Require* brochure as well as 14 chapters of the *Bible Teach* book with him in Brazzaville. Then Edvard moved to Mossaka to live with his parents. Since there were no active Witnesses there, Edvard asked his father to help him study the rest of the *Bible Teach* book. His father would ask the questions, and Edvard would answer. In this way Edvard finished the book. He then felt the need to teach others what he knew about the truth. Thus, in October 2009, he began preaching alone in the Mossaka area using the *Require* brochure. He recorded the time he spent in the ministry and regularly sent his reports to his grandfather in Brazzaville. However, the grandfather never gave them to the congregation.

Later, without knowing about Edvard, the branch sent temporary special pioneers to Mossaka for three months. Just two days before they were to leave there, Daniel, one of the temporary special pioneers, saw Edvard conducting a Bible study with the brochure *What Does God Require of Us?* So Daniel approached Edvard and spoke with him. Edvard said to him: "I am preaching. I am a publisher. You can check with my father." Daniel met with Edvard's father, who confirmed what Edvard had said. The temporary special pioneers took what little time they had remaining to train Edvard in the ministry. After they left, Edvard continued to preach with renewed zeal, conducting more than ten Bible studies. He also dedicated his life to Jehovah.

Having this background information, on the Friday of the convention mentioned earlier, two elders met with Edvard and reviewed the questions for those desiring to become unbaptized publishers. His ex-

cellent answers astounded them. The elders learned from the special pioneers that Edvard's conduct was exemplary and that he had already been unofficially preaching for nine months. Consequently, he was approved as an unbaptized publisher. Because there was a Lingala-language district convention scheduled for the following weekend, the elders arranged for Edvard to go through the baptism questions during the intervening week. He demonstrated a good understanding of the truth and was baptized at the Lingala convention in July 2010. Then, exactly one week after he had been approved as an unbaptized publisher, the elders made the announcement that Edvard was a baptized brother.

After his baptism, he served as an auxiliary pioneer for two months in Brazzaville. The elders made arrangements for him to study the book *"Keep Yourself in God's Love,"* and then he returned to Mos-saka. A special pioneer was recently appointed to serve in that territory. In April, Edvard—who was then an auxiliary pioneer—together with the special pioneer, welcomed 182 interested ones to the Memorial. Edvard has 16 studies, 7 of whom attend the meetings, which are conducted by the two brothers. In 2011, Edvard was 15 years old.

**Edvard (right) with  
Daniel at a market**





# The Americas

LANDS	55
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POPULATION	941,265,091
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PUBLISHERS	3,780,288
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BIBLE STUDIES	4,139,793
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**‘NOT AN ACCIDENT THAT I DIALED YOUR NUMBER.’** Sundie, a sister in the **United States**, was at home when the phone rang and a woman asked for someone Sundie did not know. She told the caller that she must have dialed the wrong number. The caller said that she was legally blind and sometimes makes mistakes. A conversation followed, and the woman explained that she was trying to reach her son with some unsettling news. The doctors had discovered that she had cancer. The woman was devastated and expressed frustration with God for allowing this to happen to her. Sundie realized that she had to share the Bible’s message with this woman. After saying a quick prayer for courage, Sundie shared a few encouraging scriptures that would provide comfort and hope. She explained that God has a name and encouraged the woman to use his name when she prayed and to be specific in her prayers to him. The woman thanked Sundie for listening and for the encouragement. “I don’t think it was an accident that I dialed your number,” she said.

After exchanging contact information, Sundie mailed the *Bible Teach* book audio recording and made arrangements for a pioneer sister in the woman’s area to call on her. Sundie remarked, “I am grateful that Je-

hovah has lovingly given us so much training on how to comfort individuals in all sorts of situations.”

**THE TRACT ANSWERED THEIR QUESTION.** Some sisters regularly do street work at a large medical center in **Puerto Rico**. One of them approached two men who were walking rapidly toward one of the hospitals. Noting their haste, she offered them the tract *Do You Have an Immortal Spirit?* She does not usually offer that tract while doing street work, but it happened to be the only one she had with her. Later, the two men approached another sister and explained that they had received the tract on their way to visit a family member who was gravely ill. They had been discussing whether the spirit lives on after death, and the tract had given them the answers. They said that it had helped them greatly.

**A LETTER TO JEHOVAH.** Seven-year-old Joshua attends school in the **United States**. During December, he and his classmates were assigned by their teacher to write a letter to Santa Claus. When Joshua politely refused to do so, his teacher said, “Write to anyone.” He decided to write a letter to Jehovah. “Thank you for promising a paradise,” Joshua wrote. “Thank you for having a Son, whose name is Jesus, who would give away his life. Thank you for creating things that we can enjoy. I love you, Jehovah God.” The letter,



along with other students' letters, was published in a local newspaper.

**THE FAMILY RESPONDED.** Alejandro, a brother in **Colombia**, wanted to preach to members of his family. Because they lived far away, he wrote to them and sent them some *Watchtower* and *Awake!* magazines. When his relative Pablo read the magazines and looked up the Bible texts, he recognized that the teachings of the Catholic Church were false. Excited, he shared the information with others in the family, who also recognized the ring of truth and left the Catholic religion.

Soon, 15 family members began meeting every night to study the Bible with the help of the magazines.



**Samaniego, Nariño, COLOMBIA**

Wanting to learn more, they searched for Witnesses in nearby towns, but without success. Meanwhile, they began sharing with their neighbors the things they had learned. Eventually, they learned that there was a Kingdom Hall in a town about an hour's drive away. They immediately traveled there and asked for help.

Now a regular pioneer goes to them once a week and conducts one Bible study with 26 people—Alejandro's family and 11 other interested ones. They rent a vehicle so that most of them can attend the public talk and the *Watchtower* Study.

**WAS IT REALLY THE WRONG HOUSE?** One day a sister was sick and requested that other Witnesses conduct a Bible study for her in a rural Quichua-speaking area of **Ecuador**. The brothers were not sure where the family lived but stopped at a certain home to inquire about the Bible study. The family there welcomed the brothers warmly, as if they were expecting them. It was not until after the study that the brothers realized that this family had never studied before! It turns out that the people in this family were just delighted at the prospect of a family Bible study and acted as if they were having one all along. So there is now a new Bible study being conducted, and the sister's Bible students who could not be found that day also continue to study.

**A CUPCAKE LEADS TO A WITNESS.** Caleb is six years old. On the first day of school in **Canada**, one of his classmates had a birthday, so the boy's mother, Natalie, brought in cupcakes for the class to share. Caleb politely refused. Natalie then approached Caleb, asking if he had food allergies. "No," Caleb answered, "I serve Jehovah."



After school, Natalie approached Caleb's mother and asked, "Are you one of Jehovah's Witnesses?" When she said yes, Natalie became excited. She had studied with the Witnesses as a teenager, but because of in-

tense family opposition, she had stopped studying. When asked if she would like to resume her study of the Bible, Natalie agreed.

**IT WAS NOT THE WILL OF GOD.** Laly, whose home is in **Peru**, was born deaf. When she asked her mother about it, her mother told her that it was the will of God. That left Laly sad and with feelings of resentment toward God. 'Why would he treat me badly?' she thought.

Years passed, and Laly married a young deaf man. Their first child was born with Down syndrome. Concerned and upset, she again approached her mother for help, asking, "Why was my son born this way?" Her mother sent her to a priest. The priest gave her the same answer that her mother had earlier, "It is the will of God."

**"Why is God so cruel?  
... Why punish my son?  
He was just born. What  
sin did he commit?"**

Feeling distraught, Laly responded: "Why is God so cruel? I accept that I am deaf and that God punished

me this way, but why punish my son? He was just born. What sin did he commit?" From then on, she didn't want to hear anything about God and left the church.



After a few years, one of Jehovah's Witnesses who knows sign language called at Laly's door and offered to teach her the Bible. She refused the offer and said that she didn't believe in God. Patiently, the sister explained to her that the God she didn't want to get to know is called Jehovah and that he was willing to give her the opportunity to recover her hearing and speech. Doubting that, Laly asked her to prove it. The sister opened the Bible to Isaiah 35:5 and read: "The eyes of the blind ones will be opened, and the very ears of the deaf ones will be unstopped." This surprised Laly, who then agreed to a Bible study and progressed to baptism. Her son accompanies her to all the meetings, and he has learned sign language. Her appreciation for the Bible's promises continues to grow, and she is serving as a regular pioneer.

***Sign-language publications are now  
available in 59 languages***



**São Paulo, BRAZIL**



# Asia and the Middle East

LANDS	47
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POPULATION	4,194,127,075
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PUBLISHERS	664,650
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BIBLE STUDIES	629,729
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**TWO QUESTIONS THEY COULD NOT ANSWER.** In an Asian land where our work is restricted, a 24-year-old man accepted a Bible study to prove that Witness teachings were wrong and that his Catholic beliefs were right. He soon realized, however, that Jehovah's Witnesses were teaching the truth.

When his family found out that he was studying the Bible, they summoned him to a family meeting and pressured him to return to the Catholic Church. Because the young man refused, his family assembled

**The man told the council that he would return to the church if the priest could answer two questions**

all their relatives in the village to force him to abandon his new beliefs. Even though they beat him, the man did not compromise. His family then reported him to the priest, who brought him before

the parish council. The man told the council that he would return to the church if the priest could answer two questions: What is God's name? Why does the church allow its members to eat blood when the Bible forbids it? Unable to answer either question, the priest slapped the young man in the face in order to,

as the priest put it, “exorcise the demon inside him.” The meeting then ended.

After that, the man’s family gathered all their friends to force him to kneel before an image of Mary. Although they beat him again, he refused to compromise. At that, the family arranged for an attractive girl to tell him that she would marry him if he returned to the church. The young man told her that he would return if she could answer the two questions that he had posed to the priest. The girl left and never returned. Finally, after being held against his will for seven months, the man escaped from the village and returned to the city, where he contacted the brothers. One month later, he became an unbaptized publisher. He was baptized at a circuit assembly in March 2011.

**PRISON OFFICIAL DEFENDS SISTER.** A regular pioneer sister was visiting her son who was imprisoned for Christian neutrality in **South Korea**. While in the waiting room, she handed a tract to a man sitting beside her. The man then shouted at her, saying, “Why do you people of this false religion preach even in this place?” The man’s ranting drew the attention of the 30 or 40 visitors in the room. At that, an official of the prison spoke up and scolded the man, saying: “These are people of the true religion. All the other religions are false. I have watched these people for many years while working at this prison, and I have come to realize that they are the only ones who truly practice what they are taught.” The abusive man was silenced.

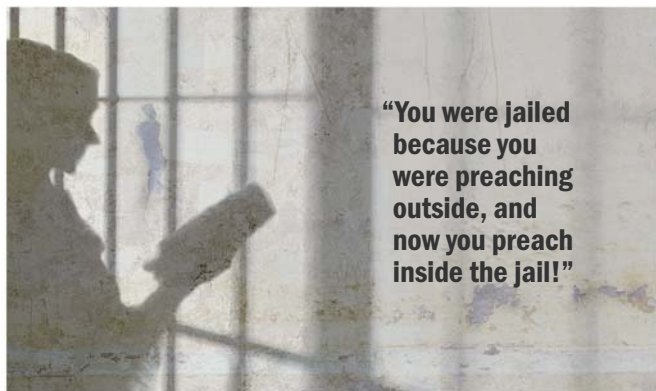
**WRITING ON THE WALL.** When Harindra started his Bible study, he had been living alone for ten years because he had gone to work in a large city in **Nepal** in order to feed and support his family back in the village.

The man was illiterate, so a Witness studied the Bible with him using the brochure *Enjoy Life on Earth Forever!* Since this brochure was not available in Nepali at the time, they used an English one. One day, the man's wife came from the village to visit him. She was surprised to see her husband studying an English brochure. Additionally, he had stopped drinking and did not beat her anymore. Learning that all these changes were a result of Harindra's Bible study, she began to study the Bible and attend the meetings in her village. Harindra desired to learn more about Jehovah, so he decided to learn how to read and write. He asked his Bible study conductor to write Nepali letters on pieces of paper, which he stuck on the walls of his room until there was no space left. He then practiced reading all the new words and letters until slowly he learned to read. In time, he arranged for his family to come and live with him in the city so that they could all worship Jehovah together. Within two years, he got baptized. Now Harindra and his family attend the meetings together, and he handles Bible reading assignments in the Theocratic Ministry School. He says, "Our life has dramatically improved thanks to Jehovah's education."

**NOT FOR \$200,000.** Zarkhanum, who lives in **Azerbaijan**, was very deeply involved in the practice of spiritism. For 15 years she was considered to have powers of extrasensory perception and the ability to tell fortunes. People also believed that she had the ability to remove spells and heal. Zarkhanum was famous, and many of her clients, being high-ranking officials and their wives, paid between \$2,000 and \$4,000 (U.S.) for a séance. Consequently, she became wealthy. Although having spiritistic powers, she herself felt spir-

itually impoverished, and many questions troubled her. Her marriage fell apart, and she lacked a purpose in life. One day, while desperately pouring out her troubles to God, she heard a knock on her door. She opened the door, and two sisters began witnessing to her. Zarkhanum was moved when she heard them speak about pleasing God not only in word but also in deed. She knew many religious people whose deeds were far from godly. She was also aware that the spiritism she practiced was a sin. She agreed to a Bible study. In time, she started to pray using Jehovah's name and saw how he answered her prayers. It was difficult, however, for her to abandon her practices—the demons constantly troubled her and even beat her. Eventually, with Jehovah's help, she broke free from demonic influence and destroyed the many items that connected her to spiritism and false religion.

Soon Zarkhanum became a zealous publisher of the good news, and she was baptized in May 2011. Immediately following her baptism, she applied to serve as an auxiliary pioneer. She had no problem meeting the hour requirement because even before baptism, she was preaching more than 70 hours a month, despite poor health. Two months before her baptism, she was offered \$200,000 (U.S.) by the wife of a government official to remove a spell. The woman believed that the spell was the cause of the sickness that had resulted in the amputation of her leg. Zarkhanum refused and, instead, sent two Witnesses to the hospital to preach the good news to this woman. Our zealous sister has been regularly preaching to her former clients, telling them that what she did before was wrong in God's eyes. As a result, one of them, the very



one who had introduced her to the government official's wife, agreed to a Bible study and began attending meetings.

**WITNESSING IN JAIL.** In **India**, two of our sisters were arrested for engaging in the ministry and were sentenced to five days in jail. One of them relates: "As soon as we were jailed, police officers asked why we were detained, and this gave us a good opportunity to witness to them. Since we had been brought to the police station directly from the field ministry, we had plenty of magazines and tracts with us. We witnessed to all and placed a lot of literature. We encouraged each other, prayed, and read the publications that we had.

"Later, we were moved to another jail in the city. Right away, inmates asked us why we were brought in. This gave us the opportunity to tell them what we had been preaching about and to identify ourselves as Jehovah's Witnesses. A female warden overheard us and said, 'You were jailed because you were preaching outside, and now you preach inside the jail!'" Our sis-

ters are now planning to follow up by visiting the prisoners who showed an interest in the truth.

**THE POLICEMAN NOTICED THE LOVE.** Two sisters were preparing to witness in some small shops in Bethlehem. Suddenly, two women rushed up and excitedly asked them in Spanish if they were Jehovah's Witnesses. The women were Witnesses from Mexico visiting **Israel** with a tour group, and they had recognized the literature that the sisters were holding. The four hugged, kissed, took photos, and exchanged addresses. After that, the Mexican sisters rejoined their tour group, and the two local sisters proceeded to visit the shops.

A few hours later, a police officer approached the local sisters and asked if they were Spanish. The sisters said that they were not. The police officer said that he had been watching when the four met and thought they must have all been long-lost friends or from the same family. The sisters explained that they were all Jehovah's Witnesses and that even when Jehovah's Witnesses are from different countries or have never met before, they feel like family because they have love among themselves. The policeman was so impressed that he took literature and asked where he could get more information about this religion. A return visit was arranged.

**"THERE JUST MAY BE SOMEONE."** Yusuke is a young pioneer serving in an English group in **Japan**. One day he learned that the next morning a cruise ship would be docking with passengers from many countries. So he got up early and despite heavy rain drove two hours to the port at Nagasaki. As he stood alone on the quay in the rain, many of the disembarking passengers mistook him for a guide and approached him. This



misunderstanding enabled Yusuke to place 70 magazines and 50 brochures in several languages within half an hour.

He went back to his car to get more literature, and when he returned, he saw a young male passenger standing alone. When Yusuke approached him, the young man asked in English, “Are you one of Jehovah’s Witnesses?” When Yusuke confirmed that he was, the man began to sob. Yusuke took him to a café where they could talk.

The young man, Jason, was 21 years old. He explained that his parents were active in the truth and that until his late teens, he had been an unbaptized publisher. About six months earlier, he had stopped associating with Jehovah’s Witnesses and had embarked on a cruise to a number of Asian countries, reasoning that in Asia he would not meet them. Because he developed an upset stomach, however, he had not been able to disembark in Thailand, Vietnam, or Taiwan. The first place he got off the ship was Japan, and the first person to speak to him was one of Jehovah’s Witnesses! Jason’s immedi-



ate thought was, 'I can never run away from Jehovah,' and that was why he had begun to weep.

There in the café, Yusuke discussed some paragraphs from the "*God's Love*" book with Jason to assure him that Jehovah still loved him. Yusuke implored Jason not to leave the organization. Sadly, they had very little time together. Jason's ship left that same evening for Inchon, South Korea, where Jason had planned several days of sightseeing.

Yusuke wondered what more he could do to help Jason and remembered a brother he had met at an international convention in South Korea. The brother spoke English and lived in Inchon. That night Yusuke telephoned him. Of course, Jason knew nothing of this connection. As Jason left the ship the next morning, he saw a big sign, "Welcome to Korea, Jason!" It was held up by five smiling Witnesses. Jason canceled all his sightseeing plans and spent time with the brothers. Hearing firsthand the experiences of young brothers his age being imprisoned for their faith moved him deeply. He also attended the Memorial there.

Jason returned to the United States, became an active publisher again, and asked the elders to study with him four times a week. He completed studying the *Bible Teach* and "*God's Love*" books and qualified for baptism. He was baptized 107 days after Yusuke first spoke to him. The following month he auxiliary pioneered.

Yusuke recalls that on that cold, wet morning, he had a strong urge to go all the way to Nagasaki, even though there was no one to go with him. He had reasoned, "There just may be someone there who will listen."



# Europe

LANDS	47
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POPULATION	736,505,919
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PUBLISHERS	1,589,052
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BIBLE STUDIES	843,405
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**THEY FOUND SOMETHING VERY SPECIAL.** Ani went to Holland from **Bulgaria** to work for a few months. One day, because she was feeling discouraged, she paused on the sidewalk and prayed to God to send her officials from her church. As she prayed, two of our sisters walked by and stopped to witness to her. Ani considered this to be an answer to her prayer, so she listened to them and began attending meetings. Though Ani could not understand the meetings, the love of the Witnesses was clearly evident to her. This was different from the disunity in her church back in Bulgaria, and she was convinced that she had found something very special. When she returned to Bulgaria, the sister who studied with her in Holland decided to go with her to help her make contact with the Witnesses in Sofia. This further impressed Ani, causing her to feel that she had found the true religion.

Soon Ani and her husband, Ivo, started to study together and attend meetings. As the study progressed, other people would come and sit in on their study. One man, Assen, was the pastor of a religious group. He had come to Ani and Ivo to prove that Jehovah's Witnesses were wrong, but he soon discovered that this was not the case. He asked deep Bible ques-

tions. Consequently, he was offered a study, which he accepted for himself and his family. For a time, Assen continued conducting religious meetings with his group, though he now taught them the truths he was learning from the *Bible Teach* book. Soon Dencho, the deacon of the group, wanted to have a Bible study. Before long, three families from the group were also studying the Bible. Since so many from the church group were now studying with Jehovah's Witnesses, they decided to discontinue their gatherings and attend congregation meetings. Dencho became a publisher and conducted Bible studies with several of his friends. Thus far, as a result of Ani's being contacted in Holland, about 30 people have started to study the Bible and attend the meetings.

**HE SIMPLY READ SCRIPTURES ABOUT MARRIAGE.** A brother and his wife in the **Czech Republic** conducted a Bible study in the Kingdom Hall with a young couple from Mongolia. Though the Witness couple worked hard to learn Mongolian, the language barrier was a major obstacle. Nevertheless, the young Mongolian couple seemed to accept Bible truth with humility and patience. One evening the young woman showed up at the meeting without her husband. She said that she intended to leave her husband because they did not understand each other. A few minutes later, the husband arrived, but he did not look at his wife. It was evident that the situation was serious. The brother took the husband to the Kingdom Hall library to discuss the matter. But because he hardly spoke Mongolian, he could not understand what had happened between the couple and could not provide specific advice. Instead, he decided simply to read to the husband from the Bible. So he read all the scriptures that

he could remember regarding marriage and communication. The young man seemed to be moved by each scripture. Suddenly, he rushed from the library, ran to his wife, and kissed her. As they were leaving the hall, the husband insisted that he carry his wife's purse, since he had learned that he should help her.

The next day they looked like newlyweds and happily talked about their deep appreciation for Jehovah and for the wise scriptural advice regarding marriage. Later, they returned to Mongolia to care for their two children. The family lives in a town where there is no congregation. The wife was baptized in October, and the husband continues to make progress toward baptism.

**“WHY DID SHE ACT THAT WAY?”** A pioneer sister, Olha, witnessed to the driver of a local food-delivery truck in **Ukraine**. She asked him, “Is there anyone we can trust?”

“No,” replied the driver. “My wife left me and took our two-year-old son with her. What more could she have wanted? I worked hard every day—everything I did was for her. She wanted a ring—here! She wanted boots—she had them. A necklace?—I gave her one. Everything was for her, so why did she act that way?”

The sister kindly asked the man how much time he spent with his wife and young son. He said: “How could I have spent time with them when I have to work until midnight? I go back to work at four o'clock in the morning. I even work on weekends.”

Olha showed him the October 2009 *Awake!* which featured the special series of articles “Secrets of Family Success.” She pointed out the first secret, “The Right Priorities.” After they reviewed the material

on that subject, the man seemed moved and said: “I thought that money was the key to family happiness and that everything else was not important. Now I see it is not money. Now I see what is missing and what my wife needs.”

A week later, Olha met the same driver, who said that he had read the magazine, thought a lot, and reconsidered many things. He had called his wife, and they were reconciled. Olha then gave him the *Family Happiness* book. The following week, when Olha saw the same delivery truck, there was a different driver. The new driver explained that the previous driver had quit his job and that with his family, he had moved to live in another area. However, he had left Olha the following message: “I want to thank you, Olha, and your God, Jehovah, because you helped me to save my family. If I meet Jehovah’s Witnesses again, I will definitely stay in touch with them.”

**HE WANTED A SIGN FROM GOD.** A young man in **Latvia** became interested in the Bible’s message some 15 years ago when Witnesses preached to him. He studied the Bible sporadically, but he could not believe that the Bible—a “mere” book—could help him find God. He expected God to reveal himself personally, perhaps in some supernatural or mystic way. So he discontinued the Bible study and later lost all





contact with the Witnesses. Some years later he was struggling with mounting problems, so he prayed to God for help. There was still no miracle, but looking out through the window, he noticed two sisters in the ministry. After praying again a few weeks later, he saw the same sisters once more passing by his window. When praying a week later, for the third time he saw the sisters passing by in the preaching work. This, he concluded, must be a sign from God! He ran outside and told the surprised sisters that he wanted to resume the Bible study he had stopped years before. Eventually, he found the strength to overcome his problems and draw close to God. How? With the help of the Bible! He was baptized at a district convention in 2010.

**EVEN LITTLE POTS HAVE EARS.** In **Denmark**, this saying means that children pick up more than you might think from the conversations of adults. About 16 years ago, a Danish sister had a Bible study with a



woman who had three sons. They all came often for the study, which was held at the home of the sister and her husband. The woman chose to discontinue the study when her youngest son, Ronnie, was eight years old. As he grew up, Ronnie had many difficulties. However, one day in 2008, when he was 22 years old, he saw our magazines in his mother's home and felt a sudden impulse to go and visit the Witnesses who had studied with him when he was a child. Fifteen minutes later, he rang the doorbell at the home of the Witness couple, and when the brother opened the door, Ronnie walked right in. It took a while before the brother recognized him, but it was a happy reunion. Ronnie accepted the *Bible Teach* book and agreed to a Bible study. It went well. Because Ronnie had been heavily involved in the fantasy world of computer games, some of them occult and violent, his conversation often turned to such matters. But the Witnesses taught him that our understanding of spiritual

matters should not be shaped by games. Ronnie understood and said: "Please stop me when I start talking about that nonsense!" Since then, he has made fine progress. This young man, who first heard about the truth during his mother's Bible study when he was a 'little pot with ears,' is now an unbaptized publisher.

**COMFORT FROM THE SCRIPTURES.** At a cemetery in **Britain**, a brother noticed a man kneeling by a grave, weeping. The brother asked if he could sit with him. The man, named Alf, agreed. Alf explained: "My daughter just died. She was only 42. Now both my wife and my daughter are buried here." He had requested counseling from the state but was told that he would have to wait three months. "I'm a wealthy businessman, and I have many business interests," said Alf, "but it is all worthless without my family. I would give it all away to get them back." Alf said that he

had faith in God, respected the Bible, and attended church, but he had no satisfying answers. At church, when he asked for some comfort, he was told to light a candle or write a note to hang on a tree. "There would not be enough room on a note for what I want to say," he retorted. The brother comforted Alf with the Scriptures. Alf is now studying the Bible.





# Oceania

LANDS	29
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POPULATION	38,162,658
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PUBLISHERS	94,309
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BIBLE STUDIES	58,465
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**THEY INVITED THE HUSBAND.** A brother in **New Zealand** reports that when he was dropping his wife off for a study with a young mother, he and his wife noted that the woman's husband was at home, so they decided to invite him to join in. The husband responded positively, and future studies were arranged for a time when he would be home. He and his wife agreed to come to the Sunday meeting, where they received a warm welcome and enjoyed the spiritual food. At the next meeting, the husband commented during the *Watchtower* Study. The study article encouraged family worship, and he asked how he could conduct a study with his wife and four-year-old son. He also expressed a desire to apply other things he had learned at the meeting. The interested couple continue to study, attend meetings, and to make spiritual progress. "How thankful we are," says the brother, "that we decided to invite the husband to join the study!"

**MEMORIAL ON A DISTANT ISLAND.** The island of Reao, having only 362 inhabitants, is assigned to the Vaiete Congregation, one of the 18 congregations of **Tahiti**. Reao is about 840 miles east of Tahiti. The Memorial had never been held on this remote island, and the



Tahiti

Reao

840 miles

Witnesses had not visited the island for 30 years. Ma-noah, the service overseer of the Vaiete Congregation, wanted to organize a small group to go to this island to preach during the week of the Memorial and then observe the occasion there. However, the airfare for him and his wife to go to Reao was about 65,000 francs (\$740 U.S.), much more than they could afford. Later, though, he received a bonus at work of 65,000 francs! They immediately concluded that Jehovah was blessing this project. Eventually, seven publishers went to Reao, and 47 people attended the Memorial. Publishers in Tahiti now conduct Bible studies over the telephone with interested people in Reao.

**NO TIME TO EAT BREAKFAST.** A similar experience comes from **Vanuatu**, where a congregation assists a group of 11 publishers on a remote island called Ambrym. The elders of the congregation invited experienced publishers to consider going to Ambrym for a few days to work with the group before the Memorial. Marinette, an experienced regular pioneer and retired teacher, seized the opportunity. She, along with some others, decided to go with the aim of starting new Bible studies. After spending only a little time in the field ministry, she was amazed to find that it was almost impossible to leave the place where she was staying. Marinette recalls: “I hardly had time to wash or have breakfast in the morning because people were already waiting outside and queuing up for Bible studies. I preached the whole day without going anywhere! I was

able to conduct 31 Bible studies during the week.” The group stayed in Ambrym for one week, busily teaching the good news, and 158 attended the Memorial. It saddened the group to leave. “How can you leave a place like this with so many people thirsting for Bible truth?” said Marinette. The branch office has arranged to send temporary special pioneers to care for the interested ones in this area.

**A PRINCIPAL RESPONDS FAVORABLY.** At a community high school in the **Solomon Islands**, students are made to stand and sing the religious songs of the South Seas Evangelical Church. Two young sisters asked the principal if they could be excused from singing, since such singing would violate their conscience. The principal thanked them for respectfully coming to her and said that they did not have to sing but could remain seated along with other Witness children.

Then she asked if they could invite someone from the congregation to come to talk to her about Jehovah’s Witnesses and education. A missionary made the call, and for about an hour and a half, they discussed our beliefs as well as problems facing young people. The principal said that she enjoyed reading *Awake!* and that she leaves copies in the teachers’ staff room. When the missionary offered her the book *Questions Young People Ask—Answers That Work*,



Volume 2, she asked if she could have 16 for the teachers and 367 for the students. Four hundred books were delivered and distributed.

As a result of the courage of these two young sisters in going to talk with the principal, a fine witness was given, and many comments have been made to them about how helpful the book has been. One young girl, whose parents had recently separated, said that the book was just what she needed to help her cope with her problems. The two sisters are auxiliary pioneering continuously, and the principal regularly receives the magazines from them.

**INTEGRITY DESPITE OPPOSITION.** Elsewhere in the **Solomon Islands**, a missionary studied the Bible with a woman, whom we will call Lisa. She made fine progress despite having to walk more than two hours to the Kingdom Hall carrying her twin boys, with her two young girls following along. She also had to endure her husband's severe opposition. He abused her physically and burned her meeting clothes, Bible, and theocratic books. He also had an adulterous relationship with another woman. But in the face of all of this, Lisa was baptized and has continued serving Jehovah steadfastly.

Last year Lisa's husband, moved by the way she treated him despite all he had done to her, dismissed his mistress and asked for his own Bible study. As you can imagine, our sister, Lisa, is ecstatic with this change. Making her life even better, an isolated group was formed near her home, and now her walk to the meetings takes just under one hour. With her husband's support, she has also been able to auxiliary pioneer.

# Acts of Jehovah's Witnesses

## IN MODERN TIMES



**Norway** Imagine preaching the good news in a land of fjords, mountains, ice, snow, and reindeer—a land where the shimmering northern lights illuminate the winter sky. Norway is just such a country. Read of our brothers who traveled by boat and on skis to reach people dwelling in remote places and of a brother who walked to the meeting barefoot. Learn, too, how Christians displayed faith and courage under the yoke of Nazi occupation.



**Rwanda** The self-sacrificing love that Jesus said would identify his disciples is evident in the history of this African country. Amid a climate of ethnic hatred leading to horrific genocide, Jehovah's people risked and sometimes lost their lives to protect one another. Here is an unforgettable story of endurance under persecution and ban and a record of integrity in the face of hardship, trial, and terror.

# Norway

THE young man on the deck of the ship gazed eagerly toward the Norwegian coast. His name was Knud Pederson Hammer. Formerly a minister in a Baptist church in North Dakota, U.S.A., Knud had become one of the Bible Students (now known as Jehovah's Witnesses) one year before. Now, in 1892, he was coming back to his native country to preach to friends and relatives.



***Knud Pederson  
Hammer***

The majority of Norway's two million inhabitants were members of the Lutheran State Church. Knud was eager to help sincere Norwegians get to know the true God, Jehovah, and to help them understand that this loving God does not torment sinners in a burning hell. He also wanted to tell them about Christ's coming Thousand Year Reign, during which the earth will become a paradise.

As the ship approached the coast, Knud scrutinized the contours of this gorgeous land—a long,



narrow country with high, snow-covered mountains, deep fjords, and extensive forests. He realized that it would be a challenge to reach the sparsely populated regions that had few roads and bridges. Although many Norwegians lived in expanding cities, others lived in rural areas, in fishing villages, or on the hundreds of islands dotting the coastline. The result of Knud's preaching as well as the growth of true worship in Norway in the face of daunting challenges is faith-strengthening and inspiring to God's people everywhere.

### **KINGDOM SEED BEARS FRUIT**

Although some in the area of Knud's hometown, Skien, showed interest in his message, he was not able to remain with them but had to return to his family in the United States. In 1899, however, he traveled to Norway again, this time at the request of Charles T. Russell, who had oversight of the work of the Bible Students at the time. Brother Russell wanted Knud to establish a congregation in Norway. Knud brought some copies of the first two volumes of the *Millennial Dawn* series of books (later called *Studies in the Scriptures*), which had been translated into Dano-Norwegian. (At that time written Norwegian was

***Reine, northern Norway***





# An Overview of Norway

**Land** Norway is known for its magnificent fjords and breathtaking mountains, as well as its thousands of islands. Excluding the Svalbard archipelago midway between the mainland and the North Pole, the country covers an area slightly larger than Italy. Although Norway can experience intense cold, especially in the Arctic north, the warm Atlantic currents and wind systems keep most of the country more temperate than other countries located at similar latitudes.

**People** Most of the five million inhabitants are ethnic Norwegians, and about 10 percent are immigrants. Many of the Sami people (formerly known as Lapps) still live by fishing, hunting, and trapping, as well as by keeping reindeer.

**Language** The official language, Norwegian, has two written forms—*Bokmål* (Book Language), which is used by the majority and has much in common with Danish, and *Nynorsk* (New Norwegian).

**Livelihood** Oil and gas production and manufacturing industries are the country's main sources of income. Fish is a major export commodity. Only about 3 percent of Norway is cultivated land.

**Food** Fish, meat, potatoes, bread, and dairy products make up most of the Norwegian diet. *Fårikål* (mutton and cabbage stew) is a well-known traditional dish. As a result of the influx of many immigrants in recent years, the diet has become more international.





## Svalbard Archipelago

Longyearbyen

NORWEGIAN SEA

SWEDEN

NORWAY

FINLAND

Gulf of Bothnia

HELSINKI

Gulf of Finland

STOCKHOLM

BALTIC SEA

NORTH SEA

DENMARK

COPENHAGEN

## COUNTIES

- Finnmark
- Troms
- Telemark
- Vestfold



***The Skien Congregation in 1911,  
with Ingebret and Berthe Andersen***

similar to Danish, and the publications could be read in both Denmark and Norway.) Knud witnessed to many people and placed some books, but after a while he again needed to return to the United States.

The following year, Ingebret Andersen, who lived just outside Skien, obtained the book then called *The Plan of the Ages*, probably one of the copies that Knud had brought to Norway. For a long time, Ingebret had been interested in the “second coming” of Christ, and now both he and his wife, Berthe, became absorbed in what they read. Soon Ingebret started to witness to others. He even went to religious meetings to tell people about Christ’s Thousand Year Reign. Later he visited those who showed interest, and soon there was

an active congregation of at least ten Bible Students in Skien.

When Knud heard from a relative about the small congregation in Skien, he returned to Norway in 1904 to find Ingebret. Knud stopped a man on the street and asked, "Can you tell me if a man named Ingebret Andersen lives in this area?" "Yes," answered the man, "that's me." Knud was so excited that he opened his suitcase right there in the middle of the street to show Ingebret the books he had brought. Ingebret, of course, was delighted to meet Knud and to see the abundance of literature.

Knud eagerly told his Norwegian fellow believers about the organization and the preaching work. By the time he returned to his family, then living in Canada, the Skien Congregation had received much encouragement to move ahead.

### **REACHING OTHER PARTS OF NORWAY**

The preaching work in Norway received a welcome boost in 1903 with the arrival of three zealous col-porteurs (full-time preachers)—Fritiof Lindkvist, Viktor Feldt, and E. R. Gundersen. Fritiof settled in the capital, Kristiania (now called Oslo), and in 1904 his home became the office of the Watch Tower Society, where literature orders and subscriptions to *Zion's Watch Tower* were processed.

Late in 1903, when Brother Gundersen was preaching





**Hallgerd Holm (1), Theodor Simonsen (2), and Lotte Holm (3)**

in Trondheim in central Norway, he witnessed to Lotte Holm, who accepted some literature. Later, she went home to the Narvik area, above the Arctic Circle, and became the first publisher in northern Norway. Afterward, Viktor Feldt went to Narvik and helped two married couples to become Bible Students. They got in touch with Lotte, and soon this small group gathered regularly to study the Bible. Lotte's sister, Hallgerd, also accepted the truth, and later they both served as zealous pioneers in various parts of Norway.

Brothers Feldt and Gundersen had particularly good response to their preaching in Bergen in 1904 and 1905. *Zion's Watch Tower* of March 1, 1905, reported: "A prominent preacher of the Free Mission church of [Bergen] has become thoroughly grasped by the clear light, and he is now setting forth the full and

# He Poured Himself Out for Jehovah

THEODOR SIMONSEN

**BORN** 1864

**BIBLE STUDENT FROM** 1905

**PROFILE** A former Free Mission preacher who became a traveling overseer.




■ WHEN Theodor learned from our publications that the hellfire doctrine is contrary to the Bible, he started to refute the false teaching in his sermons in the Free Mission church—much to the delight of many in his audience. But one day, after he gave a sermon, he was handed a slip of paper that said, “This was your last talk with us!”

Theodor gave this last talk at the Free Mission church in 1905, and he became a Bible Student that same year. Afterward, he gave countless talks to hundreds of appreciative Bible Students. Theodor supported his family financially by painting houses, while he devoted his weekends to preaching and teaching. With his excellent Bible knowledge and calm and logical way of speaking, Theodor proved to be an effective teacher. He also had a fine singing voice and usually introduced and concluded his talks by singing a song to the accompaniment of his zither.

In 1919, when his family situation made it possible, he began serving as a traveling overseer. He did so until 1935, visiting congregations in Norway, Denmark, and Sweden. It was exhausting work, which included not only





encouraging congregations and isolated groups but also giving talks in towns where there were no Bible Students. To illustrate: On one 12-month trip, he had 190 places to visit between Kristiansand in the south and Tromsø in the north. In those days, traveling overseers stayed in most places no longer than a day or two before traveling to the next stop on whatever transport was available.

Even though few of the places he visited had Bible Students, many interested people showed up when he gave a public lecture. For example, when he visited Bodø in 1922, he and Anna Andersen, a pioneer who was visiting there at the same time, preached and invited people to a public talk. Two of those who attended his talk, Johan and Olea Berntsen, showed particular interest. After the talk they invited Theodor and Anna to their home to answer their Bible questions. As a result, the Berntsens became the first Bible Students in Bodø.

Theodor was used to record most of the phonograph record talks that were produced in Norwegian in the 1930's. He served faithfully until he finished his earthly course in 1955.



true Gospel to his always large and attentive audiences.”

That preacher was Theodor Simonsen, who was later expelled from the Free Mission Church for teaching the wonderful new truths he had learned from our publications. The church’s loss, however, was the Bible Students’ gain. Among Jehovah’s people, Theodor was much appreciated as a brother and a speaker. Later, he settled in Kristiania, where there was a growing congregation of Bible Students.

### **SOME OF THE FIRST PIONEERS**

About 1905, there were congregations of Bible Students in four cities: Skien, Kristiania, Bergen, and Narvik. Soon several eager publishers started pioneering and took the good news to many other parts of the country. Those early pioneers came from interesting backgrounds.

The first pioneer sister in Norway was Helga Hess. She was an orphan and lived in Bergen, where she had become a Sunday-school teacher at the age of 17. When she heard Theodor Simonsen speak in the Free Mission church about what he had learned by reading one of the Bible Students’ books, her interest was aroused and she started to read the same literature. She resigned as Sunday-school teacher, and in 1905, at 19 years of age, she set out to spread the good news in Hamar and Gjøvik.

One day in 1908, Andreas Øiseth was chopping wood at the family farm near Kongsvinger when a pioneer called and left the book *The Divine Plan of the Ages* with him. Andreas, who was in his early 20’s, loved what he read and ordered more literature. After some months he turned the farm over to one of his



**Early pioneers: (1) Helga Hess, (2) Andreas Øiseth, (3) Karl Gunberg, (4) Hulda Andersen, and (5) Anna Andersen**

younger brothers and began to pioneer. During the next eight years, he preached throughout almost the entire country. First he went northward, traveling inland by bicycle in the summer and by kick-sled in the winter. When he came to Tromsø, he turned southward and covered the areas along the coast all the way to Kristiania.

Anna Andersen from Rygge, near Moss, was also one of the early pioneers. She had been a Salvation Army officer for years and had devoted herself to helping the needy. In about 1907 she read some of our publications and realized that she had found the truth. In Kristiansund she got in touch with another Salvation Army officer, named Hulda Andersen (later Øiseth), who showed interest in the Bible. Soon those two women set out on a long trip northward on a coastal steamer, which took them all the way to



Kirkenes, close to the Russian border. En route, they went ashore at every port and placed literature. In 1912 or thereabouts, Anna enrolled as a pioneer. For decades she traveled all over the country by boat and bicycle, reaching nearly every town in Norway with Bible literature. She spent quite some time in the south at Kristiansand, where she provided valuable support to the growing congregation.

Karl Gunberg had been an officer in the navy before he became a Bible Student. He started out as a pioneer when he was in his mid-30's, in about 1911, and supported himself as a navigation instructor. Despite Karl's rather stern appearance, he was known as a pleasant and humorous person. He preached throughout Norway well into his old age, and his background as a naval officer and navigation teacher proved to be very useful in spreading the good news, as we will see later.

### **STRENGTHENING THE BROTHERHOOD**

In October 1905, there was much excitement over the first assembly held in Kristiania. About 15 were present, and 3 were baptized. In 1906 an assembly was held in Bergen, and from 1909 on, assemblies were arranged every year, with speakers from Denmark, Finland, and Sweden. Some of those brothers also visited congregations as pilgrims, forerunners of today's traveling overseers.

The highlights of those years were Brother Russell's visits. In 1909 he visited both Bergen and Kristiania. How the brothers and sisters appreciated the opportunity to meet him and listen to his talks! The second visit, in 1911, received much publicity, and the 61 brothers and sisters who gathered to hear

Brother Russell's public talk were delighted to have an estimated 1,200 in attendance!

Three years later, Brother Russell assigned Henry Bjørnstad to visit the brothers in Norway and Sweden regularly as the first Norwegian traveling overseer.

### PICKING UP THE PACE BEFORE 1914

A useful preaching tool became available in 1910 in the form of a tract series called *Peoples Pulpit*. This helped more of the Bible Students to share actively in the preaching work. Eager to expose religious error and explain Bible truths, the brothers and sisters distributed thousands of copies free of charge, often as enclosures in newspapers.

The Bible Students were anxious to see what would happen in 1914. The book *The Time Is at Hand* (the second volume of the *Millennial Dawn* series) explained that the times of the Gentiles would end in 1914 and would be marked by trouble and anarchy, after which God's Kingdom would begin to take control. The Bible Students also expected that Christ's joint heirs would then receive their heavenly reward.

#### **"Peoples Pulpit"**



This subject often became a topic of conversation. For example, one evening in July 1914, Karl Kristiansen was playing in the Skien city orchestra. During the intermission he said to some of the people around him: "In a few weeks, something is going to happen. First there will be war, then revolution, then

anarchy, and then God's Kingdom will come." When World War I broke out shortly after that, people came to Karl and wanted to know more.

Farther south along the coast, in Arendal, there was just one Bible Student in 1914. One day this sister met Mia Apesland on the street and told her that according to the Bible, there would be war in the autumn of 1914. "If that happens," responded Mia, "I will believe." Soon, when Mia saw that what the sister had told her was taking place, she lived up to her promise by becoming a true believer. Mia, the sister who spoke to her, and a few others formed the nucleus of the Arendal Congregation.

### **PROGRESS, THEN PROBLEMS**

As things turned out, not all the Bible Students' expectations for 1914 were realized. Nevertheless, they zealously continued their activity. From December 1914 until well into 1915, the impressive slide-and-film presentation the "Photo-Drama of Creation" gave a wonderful witness to large audiences in Kristiania, Bergen, Trondheim, Skien, Arendal, and Kristiansand.

Shortly thereafter, however, some problems arose. Fritiof Lindkvist, who had directed the work in Norway for about ten years, started to go his own way, and in 1916 he left the organization. As a result, responsible brothers in Sweden and Denmark supervised the work in Norway for the next few years. In 1921, Enok Öman was assigned to oversee the work in Norway, which he did until 1945.

There was also some unrest when C. T. Russell died in 1916 and was succeeded by J. F. Rutherford as the overseer of the Bible Students' activities. Because



## He 'Walked With God'

ENOK ÖMAN

**BORN** 1880    **BAPTIZED** 1911

**PROFILE** Served as branch overseer from 1921 until 1945.

■ WHEN Enok was a youth in Sweden, the Bible account about how Enoch “went on walking with the true God” made a deep impression on him. (Gen. 5: 22) Enok wanted to do the same as his Biblical namesake. But it was not until he was 31 years of age, when he read the first volume of *Studies in the Scriptures*, that he learned more about walking with God. He was baptized as a Bible Student and started to pioneer. Later he served at the Sweden branch office.

In 1917, Enok was sent from Sweden to Norway to serve at the branch office, and beginning in 1921, he was assigned to oversee the work in Norway. At that time, the Watch Tower Society's office was in one room of a building in which Sister Maria Dreyer had an apartment as well as a pedicure salon. After Enok and Maria were married in 1922, they used her entire apartment for the branch office. They worked together at Bethel until Maria's death in 1944. In 1953, Enok remarried and entered the pioneer service again. With his heavenly calling always in sharp focus, Enok faithfully 'walked with God' until his death in 1975.

of unfulfilled expectations with regard to 1914 as well as organizational changes, many left the organization. The consequences were particularly serious in Bergen, where, in 1918, only one brother and seven sisters remained in the congregation. In Trondheim, quite a number left the congregation, and a group in Kristiania also fell away. But those who loyally supported the organization soon experienced Jehovah's rich blessing.

### RENEWED IMPETUS

"Millions Now Living Will Never Die" was the intriguing discourse given by Brother Rutherford in 1918. From 1920 through 1925, this stirring talk was given throughout the world. A. H. Macmillan came from the world headquarters in New York to give the talk in a number of cities in Norway. In Kristiania, every seat in the university auditorium was taken, and many people were turned away. However, Brother Öman climbed onto a box at the entrance and loudly announced: "If you come back in one hour and a half, Macmillan will give the talk again!" Sure enough, people filled the hall again to hear Brother Macmillan give the talk a second time. For some years afterward, Norwegian brothers gave the talk throughout the rest of Norway. Thousands listened eagerly to the convincing Scriptural evidence that many will survive Armageddon and gain everlasting life on a paradise earth. Many also received the message by means of the booklet *Millions Now Living Will Never Die!*

From 1922 to 1928, the Bible Students distributed hundreds of thousands of tracts containing resolutions that had been adopted at conventions, such as *A Challenge to World Leaders*, *A Warning to All*



**The Norwegian  
"Golden Age"**

Christians, and Ecclesiastics Indicted. Many Bible Students got started in the preaching work by distributing those tracts.

Still, growth was rather slow. Although the pioneers and zealous publishers preached persistently, others needed help to get more involved in the preaching work. Moreover, the publications were still mainly in Danish, Dano-Norwegian, or Swedish, but not Norwegian. What could be done to give the work further impetus?

The April 1925 Norwegian-language *Bulletin* (now *Our Kingdom Ministry*) made a thrilling announcement: "We hereby send you the first issue of *The Golden Age* in Norwegian. Subscriptions can now be obtained." That was the March 1925 issue of *The Golden Age* (now known as *Awake!*). The Norwegian *Golden Age* soon had a wide circulation, not only in Norway but also in Denmark. By 1936, when the name of the Norwegian *Golden Age* was changed to *Ny Verden* (New World), the magazine had 6,190 Norwegian subscribers.

## BETTER ORGANIZATION AND NEW FACILITIES

In May 1925, more than 500 Bible Students from various parts of Scandinavia gathered for a convention in Örebro, Sweden. At the convention, Brother Rutherford announced that a Northern European Office would be established in Copenhagen, Denmark. William Dey would come from London to supervise the

activities of God's people in Denmark, Norway, Sweden, Finland, and the Baltic countries. The various countries would still have a local overseer, and Enok Öman would continue in that capacity in Norway.

William Dey, originally from Scotland, was an energetic brother who did much to help speed up the preaching work. An able organizer, he also encouraged the brothers by his pleasant disposition and good example in the ministry. During September and October 1925, he traveled throughout Norway and organized congregation activities according to the guidelines from the headquarters, speaking in English and using an interpreter. Brother Dey served as overseer of the Northern European Office until World War II.

For some time, the brothers had been looking for a more suitable place for the Norway office. In 1925 a brother who had inherited some money bought a three-story building in Oslo and sold it to the organization for about half the price. The timing could not have been better! This building served our needs very well until 1983.

### **AN ORGANIZATION OF ACTIVE WITNESSES**

The year 1931 saw an important milestone in the history of God's servants throughout the world. In that year they adopted a new name—Jehovah's Witnesses. "When adopting our new name," wrote Brother Öman, "we all rose to our feet and with great enthusiasm shouted 'Ja' [Yes]." The brothers and sisters were thrilled to have a Scriptural name, and they were determined to live up to it.

It was evident that Jehovah was blessing the vigorous preaching work in Norway. The average number of publishers increased from 15 in 1918 to 328 in 1938.

Jehovah's people were not just Bible Students; they were active witnesses.

One example was Even Gundersrud, who was baptized in 1917 and associated with the Skien Congregation. At first, his wife tried to prevent him from attending meetings by hiding his shoes. But that did not stop him—he simply went to the meeting barefoot! On

one occasion when she locked Even in the bedroom, he got out of the house by jumping out the window. Nothing Even's wife did prevented him from attending the meetings.

At the same time, he continued be-

ing kind to her. She began feeling embarrassed about her husband going into the city barefoot. Wanting to find out why the meetings meant so much to Even, she started to accompany him. Eventually, she too became one of Jehovah's Witnesses.

The Skien Congregation's enthusiasm was typical of the attitude of congregations at that time. The brothers there preached extensively in nearby cities, towns, and rural areas. On weekends they often went out in open trucks or boats, preaching and arranging meetings. Soon new groups and congregations were formed in that area. Other congregations, likewise, were hives of theocratic activity.

*Even Gundersrud*







***Members of the Skien Congregation often went out in an open truck to witness in surrounding areas***

### **GOOD PROGRESS IN BERGEN**

One of the active publishers in the Bergen area was Torkel Ringereide. In 1918 he found a brochure published by the Bible Students. He sought out Brother Dahl, the only brother in the Bergen Congregation at that time. Brother Dahl held meetings in his home with the rest of the congregation—seven sisters. Among them was Helga Hess, mentioned earlier, who was back in Bergen. Torkel joined the small congregation, and in 1919 he and Helga were married.

Torkel was a fearless man with a powerful voice. For years he was the only public speaker in the congregation. Normally, he gave talks every Sunday, forthrightly exposing the hypocrisy of the clergy and their false religious teachings. The talks were often announced in the newspapers, and the number of interested ones attending meetings far exceeded the number of Bible Students in the area.



**Torkel Ringereide**

Torkel encouraged the audience to share the truth with others. In 1932, Nils Raae was one of those listeners. Nils had known the truth for a year, but he was reluctant to begin preaching. The congregation was about to start an extensive campaign with the booklet *The Kingdom, the Hope of the World*, and Torkel gave a talk about the need to take part in the ministry. "It was a superb talk," said Nils, "and it made my feet tingle." In the

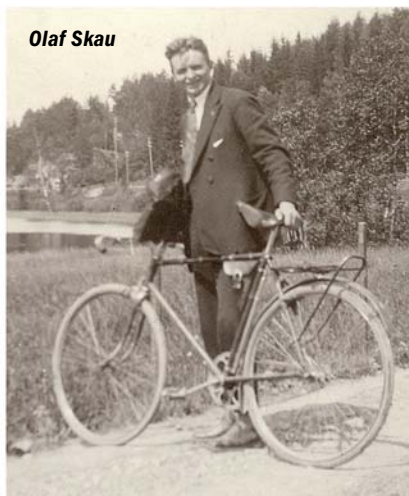
conclusion of the talk, Torkel quoted Jehovah's words recorded at Isaiah 6:8: "Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?" Torkel then said: "May we all answer as Isaiah did: 'Here I am! Send me!'" This was just the motivation Nils and his wife needed. With no further hesitation, they started out in the ministry.

The brothers and sisters used to frequent Torkel and Helga's home. They were always discussing the truth, and this gave new and young publishers much encouragement. The Bergen publishers often went out to preach in the surrounding districts by boat and truck. Afterward, they gathered to tell experiences and enjoy happy association.

### **OSLO'S ZEALOUS PREACHERS**

During the 1920's and 1930's, the preaching work was also flourishing in the Oslo area. One of

the publishers was Olaf Skau, who was baptized in 1923. In 1927 he was appointed as service director in the congregation, and for decades he was an enterprising and caring overseer. He organized the preaching work in Oslo and also arranged weekend trips by bus or truck to the areas around the capital. Late at night he would still be awake drawing maps and planning preaching expeditions.



Publishers from Oslo preached in cities and rural areas from Halden and Fredrikstad to the south of Oslo to Hamar to the north, and from Kongsvinger to the east of the city to Drammen and Hønefoss to the west. The publishers arrived in the territory by about 9:00 a.m. and preached from house to house all day. Frequently, their visits included public meetings. This activity helped lay the foundation for new groups and congregations and was deeply appreciated by the few brothers and sisters in those areas. During one nine-day campaign in 1935, the 76 publishers in Oslo placed 13,313 booklets, an average of more than 175 booklets per publisher!

Olaf's wife, Esther, suffered from arthritis and was confined to a wheelchair. Yet, their home was a popular gathering place for the brothers and sisters. Olaf usually did the cooking, often serving delicious



## “He Was a Ray of Sunshine”

WILHELM UHRE

**BORN** 1901    **BAPTIZED** 1949

**PROFILE** An enthusiastic preacher despite having a debilitating muscle disease.

■ WILHELM had a muscle disease that had paralyzed his legs and made it difficult for him to speak. Nevertheless, as soon as he heard the good news in

the mid-1930's, he started telling others about the wonderful truths he was learning. He used his motorized tri-cycle to engage in the preaching work and regularly went to the Sortland harbor in Vesterålen to play phonograph recordings of Bible talks and place literature. Because of Wilhelm's disability and isolation, it was not until 1949 that he was baptized. But he was a zealous preacher. Many who traveled along the coast learned the truth from him, and some of them became Jehovah's Witnesses.

When Wilhelm got older, he lived in a nursing home in Tromsø. With the assistance of other publishers, he continued witnessing by mail. Because of his good-natured and pleasant manner, he was a source of encouragement to others, including the staff at the nursing home. When he died, the manager said: "It always made us happy to go into his room. Because of his faith, he was a ray of sunshine."

chicken wings, for which he was well-known. But it was the spiritually upbuilding gatherings, fascinating Scriptural discussions, and Bible quizzes at the Skaus' home that many older Witnesses still remember. "We never left the Skaus' house with an empty heart," recalled Ragnhild Simonsen.

### **"RIGHTLY DISPOSED FOR EVERLASTING LIFE"**

In earlier years people were more religious and had more Bible knowledge than they do now. Many were willing to discuss Scriptural matters, and as in the first century, "those who were rightly disposed for everlasting life became believers."—Acts 13:48.

Durdei Hamre is an example of such. In 1924 she accepted a booklet, which she read that same evening and through the night. "I went to bed as a Pentecostal," she later said, "and I woke up as one of Jehovah's Witnesses."

**"I went to bed as  
a Pentecostal, and I  
woke up as one of  
Jehovah's Witnesses"**

In the mid-1920's, one of the eight Fjelltvædt brothers attended a public talk about hellfire and obtained a booklet on the topic. What he read convinced him that the hellfire doctrine is false. Soon thereafter, when the family was gathered at the family farm, he excitedly shared what he had learned with his seven brothers and three sisters. They discussed the booklet till late that night. In a short time, all the siblings and many of their marriage mates became Bible Students. Later, many of their children and grandchildren became zealous publishers, and some carried the truth to other areas.

People's spiritual interest was evident in 1936 when M. A. Howlett from the world headquarters in New York was the speaker at conventions in Bergen

and Oslo. In Bergen, 810 attended the public talk, including some ministers of religion and a bishop. Only 125 of those assembled were Witnesses. In Oslo, where 140 Witnesses were gathered, 1,014 attended the public talk!

### **“THEY ARE STARTING TO COME!”**

How excited Jehovah’s Witnesses were in 1935 when the identity of the “great crowd” mentioned at Revelation 7:9-17 was made clear. God’s people were delighted to learn that worshippers who hope to live on a paradise earth could join the anointed remnant as dedicated servants of Jehovah. From that year on, the focus of the preaching work was on gathering the great crowd, who would survive “the great tribulation”—the biggest ingathering of true worshippers in mankind’s history.

In 1935 some pioneers with the heavenly hope were preaching in a rural area near Lillehammer. Ten-year-old John Johansen listened eagerly as the pioneers told his family about God’s purpose for a paradise earth. By the time he was 13, John had such a strong desire to share his happy hope with others that he borrowed his father’s bag and went out to preach in their neighborhood—all by himself! Now, more than 70 years later, John, along with his wife, Edith, is still preaching zealously, thrilled to have had a share in the great influx of new ones over the years.

One day in 1937, Olaf Rød and another brother were at Olaf’s home discussing the great crowd. They were the only two Witnesses in Haugesund, and they were wondering how this huge ingathering would take place. Suddenly, there was a knock at the door. Olaf opened the door, and there stood

# He Kept His Promise

JOHANNES KÅRSTAD

**BORN** 1903    **BAPTIZED** 1931

**PROFILE** Served on pioneer boats for eight years.



■ IN 1929, Johannes was in the hospital recovering from tuberculosis. He started reading the Bible and promised God that he would serve Him when he recovered from his illness.

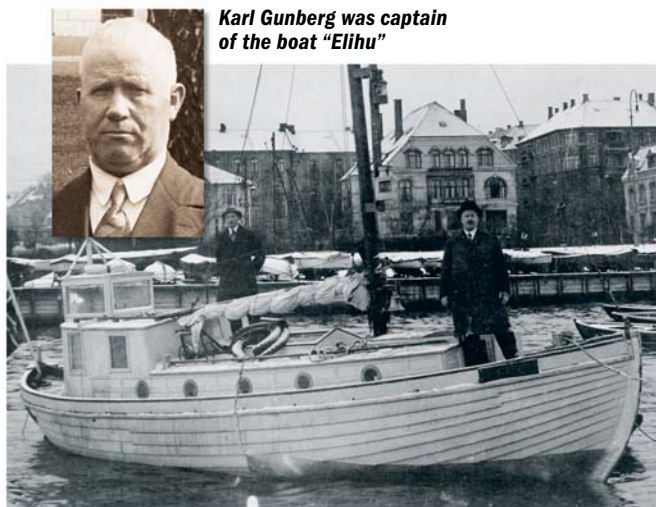
Shortly before he was discharged, Johannes read with great interest some of the Bible Students' books. Later, he acquired more books, which he read four or five times each, and it was not long before Johannes was sharing his newfound truths with others. As soon as he recovered fully, he went to Bergen and called on Brother Ringereide, who suggested that Johannes start pioneering. Although Johannes had barely started preaching, he did not hesitate to enroll as a pioneer.

From 1931 to 1938, he served on the pioneer boat *Ester*, and then he pioneered about one year on the *Ruth*, plying the waters along the entire coast as far north as Tromsø. In 1939, Johannes became a traveling overseer in the eastern part of Norway, in addition to serving part-time at Bethel for a while. After World War II, he married Sigrid and pioneered with her. In 1995, Johannes finished his earthly course in Fredrikstad.

Alfred Trengereid. He had found and read a copy of *The Watchtower* and liked what he read. Without delay, he then got into his boat and rowed to Haugesund to get literature from the man he knew to be a Witness —Olaf. Olaf was amazed. 'Now, they are starting to come!' he thought. And come they did, although not all in the same way and not all at the same time. Alfred became a brother and was joined by many others from the area who responded to the good news of the Kingdom.

### **BOATS HELP TO GATHER THE GREAT CROWD**

When the preaching work was first starting in Norway, the prospect of preaching to the isolated inhabitants of countless islands and remote coastal areas was daunting. Hence, in 1928 the branch office



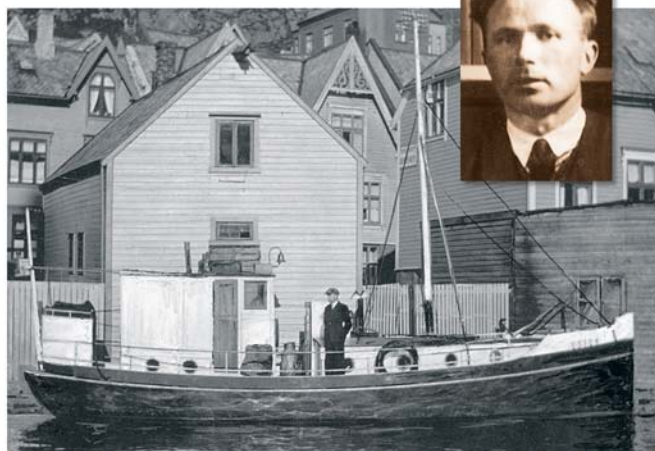
**Karl Gunberg was captain  
of the boat "Elihu"**



bought a motorboat that was large enough to accommodate two or three pioneers and robust enough to navigate Norway's jagged coastline. But who was qualified to captain such a boat? The experienced pioneer Karl Gunberg volunteered. His background in the navy and experience as a navigation teacher proved to be very useful. The first boat, named *Elihu*, put out to sea from Oslo, headed south, and stopped at ports along the coast. However, one stormy winter's night in 1929, the *Elihu* was wrecked not far from Stavanger. All were grateful that the brothers on board reached the shore safely.

In 1931 the brothers obtained another boat, which they named *Ester*. Again Karl set out, assisted by two other brothers. The *Ester* covered territories in

***Johannes Kårstad oversaw  
the boat "Ester"***



western and northern Norway for the next seven years. In 1932, Karl felt that he was getting “too old to embark on more adventures.” So he stepped ashore to serve as a pioneer in eastern Norway and left the boat in the hands of Johannes Kårstad. In 1938 the *Ester* was replaced by a boat named *Ruth*, which was used until 1940, when World War II put a stop to the maritime preaching activity. The sailing pioneers had covered vast areas and placed much literature. In 1939 the two brothers on the *Ruth*, Andreas Hope and Magnus Randal, reported that in just one year, they had placed more than 16,000 books, booklets and magazines and had played 1,072 phonograph talks for 2,531 listeners.

**Andreas Hope and Magnus Randal served on the boat “Ruth”**



In addition to many wonderful spiritual experiences, the brothers on the boats saw some awesome sights. “Day after day we headed north,” reported Andreas Hope, “in and out of fjords and around towering headlands. The scenery was magnificent, majestic, and wild.” In winter, north of the Arctic Circle, they gasped at “the breathtaking radiance of the northern lights [aurora borealis].” And in summer they were dazzled by “the brilliance of the midnight sun.”





*The aurora borealis in northern Norway*

### **A ZEALOUS PIONEER SISTER**

During the 1930's, the number of pioneers increased rapidly. Having few conveniences, they had to make do, yet they covered vast territories, preaching the good news and distributing Bible literature. Their unflagging zeal helped lay a solid foundation for future growth.

For example, Solveig Løvås (later Stormyr), from Oslo, had been searching for the truth and had attended various religious meetings. One day she attended a meeting of Jehovah's Witnesses and realized that she had found Bible truth. She was baptized in 1933, and two years later she traveled to northern Norway to serve as a pioneer. Although she limped a little because of polio, in six years Solveig preached in most of the cities, towns, fishing villages, and small

communities from south of Bodø all the way to Kirkenes. Thousands of people accepted Bible literature. In just one year, Solveig obtained more than 1,100 subscriptions to our magazines!

One person who showed great interest in Solveig's message was the carpenter Dag Jensen in the village of Hennes in Vesterålen. For years he had obtained our literature from other inter-



**Solveig Løvås**

ested people. When Solveig came to Dag, she arranged for him to have a magazine subscription, and then she moved on to witness in other territories. On his own, Dag started to preach, lending the little literature he had to other interested individuals.

On the island of Andøya, Solveig approached a group of burly fishermen in their shack. She gave a bold witness, played phonograph talks, and offered magazine subscriptions. One young fisherman, Frits Madsen, was interested and subscribed to our magazines. When she had covered the territory, Solveig traveled on. Such was the pattern time and again—pioneers preached, found interested people, placed literature and obtained subscriptions, and then traveled on to new territories. What could be done to follow up on all this interest?

### **SHEPHERDING GOD'S SHEEP**

January 1939 saw the start of a new arrangement for traveling overseers. Norway was divided into four

zones, or circuits. The circuit overseers (then called zone servants) were to spend more time at each place than they had before. They put much more emphasis on assisting the congregations, organizing new congregations, and helping interested people take up the ministry. Andreas Kvinge was appointed to serve as circuit overseer in Circuit 4, which extended 1,600 miles, all the way from Florø to Kirkenes. In that vast stretch of land, there were just three congregations—Trondheim, Namsos, and Narvik. But there were also isolated publishers and groups and a list of magazine subscribers to visit.

Andreas traveled northward with his wife, Sigrid, mainly by bicycle. He tried to help publishers and interested ones to progress in the truth. Pioneers such as Solveig Løvås gave Andreas additional information about interested ones who needed spiritual assistance. For example, she told him about Dag Jensen at Hennes and Frits Madsen on the island of Andøya.



In 1940, when Andreas met Dag for the first time, “he was shaving, and his face was full of soap,” recalls Andreas. “I will never forget those beaming eyes surrounded by lather. He forgot completely about shaving.” Andreas helped Dag to make spiritual progress. Dag was enthusiastic, and soon he helped

***Andreas and Sigrid Kvinge***

his wife, Anna, and many of his friends and relatives to learn the truth.

In the village of Bleik on Andøya, Andreas sought out the young fisherman Frits Madsen. With Andreas' help, Frits and his wife became the foundation of the congregation that was later formed there. In many other places, Andreas and his wife visited those who had initially been contacted by Solveig and other hardworking pioneers. Andreas and the other circuit overseers arranged meetings and formed congregations. As was true of the first-century Christian congregation, some in Norway were planting, and others were watering; but in a mighty way, "God kept making it grow."—1 Cor. 3:6.

### **WORLD WAR II ROCKS NORWAY**

In April 1940, Norway was dragged into the second world war when German troops invaded the country. After just 62 days of combat, the entire country was under the control of Nazi Germany. By then, several towns had been subjected to intense bombardment. Some days after the invasion began, the Gestapo arrested the branch overseer, Enok Öman, and imprisoned him for a week. After a short interrogation, the officers released him. Some weeks later the Gestapo again took Brother Öman in for interrogation.

The brothers feared that the Nazis would send them to concentration camps, as had been done in Germany. But the Nazis took no such action, and the publishers continued preaching with determination and zeal. Actually, people seemed to be more receptive to the good news because of the war, and many home Bible studies (then called model studies) were started. The brothers still received the Danish *Watch-*

tower from Denmark, while *Consolation* (*Ny Verden*) continued to be published in Norwegian. The brothers still held meetings and assemblies, and amazingly the number of publishers increased.

### **CONFISCATIONS, ARRESTS, AND THE BAN**

But trouble was brewing. Yet again, German policemen came to the branch office, asked for literature, and interrogated Brother Öman. Late in 1940, they confiscated the book *Enemies* because of statements in it regarding Fascism and Nazism. Early in 1941, the police arrested and interrogated several pioneers. German and Norwegian Nazis sometimes attended meetings to spy on the congregations. Then, the Nazi authorities came and confiscated the office's supply of two booklets, *Fascism or Freedom* and *Government and Peace*.

Suddenly, in July 1941, the Gestapo initiated a countrywide effort to put an end to our preaching work in Norway. Five German police officers came to Bethel, confiscated what was left of the literature, and took the Bethel family to the police headquarters for interrogation. Brother Öman had to report to the State police every day, which he did for 12 weeks.

In a well-coordinated operation, the Gestapo raided the homes of responsible brothers and confiscated all literature published by the Watch Tower Society. They told the brothers that they would be sent to concentration camps if they did not stop preaching. The Gestapo arrested several brothers and sisters and detained some for a few days.

In Moss the police came to the home of Sigurd Roos and confiscated his literature. Sigurd, his wife, and another brother were arrested. The police demanded

that they stop preaching and stop using the name Jehovah. The publishers explained that they would never stop preaching about Jehovah and his Kingdom. Eventually, the police acknowledged: “Well, we cannot take your faith away from you.” After a few hours, they released those steadfast publishers.

**“Well, we  
cannot take  
your faith away  
from you”**

The Nazis also went to the home of Olaf Skau, in Oslo. They ransacked his house and confiscated Bibles, literature, and phonographs. They also sealed Olaf’s book cabinet. The officers did not find the publisher record cards, which had been hidden in the oven. Later, the Nazis returned with a truck to take away the books. The leader was SS-Untersturmführer Klaus Grossmann, a feared Nazi. When Olaf asked Grossmann what they would do with the Bible literature, the officer said that they would make paper pulp out of it.

“But don’t you have any fear of Jehovah?” asked Brother Skau.

“Jehovah had better be careful!” answered the Nazi arrogantly. When the Nazis surrendered four years later, Grossmann committed suicide.

The Gestapo arrested Andreas Kvinge in Bodø in July 1941 and asked him where the Witnesses in northern Norway could be found. “I do not know where they are today,” Andreas replied truthfully. Imagine how Andreas felt during the interrogation when the officers scattered the contents of his bag all over the floor—papers that listed the names and addresses of congregations, servants in the congregations, and interested people. To Andreas’ great relief, though, no one took the trouble to examine those papers. The Ge-



stapo were more intent on getting Andreas to sign a statement admitting that it was forbidden to preach and serve as one of Jehovah's Witnesses.

"We know that our activity is now banned," responded Andreas, "so I can sign that I am aware of this. But even though it is forbidden to hold meetings and distribute magazines and books, we will continue to use the Bible and speak to people about God's Kingdom." When it was clear that Andreas would not compromise, the Gestapo released him.

Finally, the Nazi authorities confiscated the house that the brothers were using as the branch office. They permitted Brother and Sister Öman to remain, but the other members of the Bethel family had to leave.

### **MEETING TOGETHER UNDER BAN**

When the Nazis tried to stamp out Jehovah's Witnesses, the brothers simply shifted their theocratic activities underground. A few brothers did some traveling to visit and encourage the brothers and sisters. Søren Lauridsen, who had served at Bethel for a while, traveled in southern Norway. And in northern Norway, Andreas Kvinge kept on visiting Witnesses in his circuit—often taking odd jobs to avoid arousing suspicion. In 1943, Magnus Randal, who had served on the pioneer boat *Ruth*, obtained addresses from Brother Öman and set out northward on a 750-mile-long bicycle trip to Bodø to encourage the brothers and sisters.

Although the authorities prohibited meetings, groups of brothers and sisters continued to assemble to encourage one another. Normally, small groups gathered in private homes, but sometimes they met

secretly in larger numbers. How delighted they were in 1942 to have 280 at the Memorial held at two venues in Oslo, with 90 partaking of the emblems!

The Witnesses were even able to arrange secret assemblies at isolated farms or in the woods. The largest of these gatherings was in 1943 in a forest outside the village of Ski. About 180 brothers and sisters assembled from the area around the Oslo Fjord. During one of the intermissions, when the delegates were enjoying a meal, suddenly three German soldiers on horses appeared. What should the brothers and sisters do?

A German-speaking brother approached the soldiers and found out that they wanted to go swimming but had lost their way. Of course, the brothers were eager to show the soldiers where to go.

“What kind of gathering do you think that was?” one of the soldiers asked the others as they departed.

“Probably some kind of choral society,” his companion replied. The brothers and sisters were not about to correct the soldiers but heaved a sigh of relief as the horsemen disappeared into the forest.

***A secret assembly in a forest near Ski***



## WORKING UNDERGROUND

Many publishers had stashed publications in novel hiding places. The term “underground” took on new meaning when the brothers buried literature in the ground and dug it up when needed. Brother Skau, who was an electrician, hid one carton of books behind a transformer at his place of work. Brother Øiseth hid literature in a beehive, and Brother Kvinge had a cache in a potato bin.

Concerned that the literature depot in Harstad might be discovered, Lotte Holm went to retrieve all the cartons of literature. She boarded a boat, carefully stacked the cartons on the deck, and sat down on the stack. As the boat departed, Lotte was dismayed to see how many German soldiers were on board and anxiously contemplated how she would unload the literature without being exposed. However, she need not have worried. When the boat docked, the soldiers felt sorry for the old lady who had so many heavy things to carry, so they helped her ashore with all the cartons and even carried them to her home for her. Little did those polite soldiers know how much their kindness benefited the Witnesses at that time.

In spite of the ban, brothers continued smuggling the latest copies of *The Watchtower* into Norway from Sweden and Denmark. They translated study articles into Norwegian and distributed typewritten copies countrywide. A complex network of couriers traveled by train, bicycle, or boat to get the timely spiritual food to true worshippers throughout the country.

## **THEY KEPT ON PREACHING**

During the war, a situation developed that proved to be a test for the brothers and sisters in Norway. When our work was banned in July 1941, the brothers were advised to be careful so as not to provoke the Nazi authorities. Therefore, many preached informally to friends and relatives or visited people they had spoken to in the past. Some brothers, though, felt that this approach was too passive and that there was nothing to be lost by preaching from house to house using only the Bible. Although there was some disagreement about how the preaching work should be done, both groups had a strong desire to serve Jehovah faithfully in the face of opposition.

What could the brothers do? The war made communication with world headquarters in New York impossible, so it did not seem likely that the matter could be settled quickly. Would the brothers allow their differences to weaken their faith? Or would they continue preaching as best they could and wait for Jehovah and his organization to settle the matter?

It is evident that Jehovah was blessing their faithful service, for the organization enjoyed the same growth during the war as it did in the five years prior to the war. In spite of the war, the ban, and the different ways of doing the preaching, the peak of publishers increased from 462 in 1940 to 689 in 1945—giving the brothers reason, indeed, to rejoice!

## **UNITED IN JEHOVAH'S SERVICE**

After the war ended in 1945, William Dey came to Norway in July and August to help the brothers reorganize their activity. Brother Dey arranged meetings in Oslo, Skien, and Bergen and appealed to all

the brothers to unify their sincere efforts. He pointed out that they had experienced Jehovah's blessing, had seen an increase, and could move ahead with confidence in Jehovah's guidance.

In September 1945, Nathan H. Knorr, at world headquarters, contacted Marvin F. Anderson, a 28-year-old American brother of Danish descent who had served at Bethel in New York and was serving as a circuit overseer in the United States. Brother Knorr asked Brother Anderson if he was willing to travel to Norway to take care of certain matters and to stay in Norway "a good many years." Brother Anderson agreed, even though it would be some months before he could actually get to Norway.

In the meantime, Brothers Knorr and Henschel visited Norway in December 1945. Their loving direction helped the brothers forge a strong bond of love and unity. At the same time, Brother Knorr announced that Brother Dey would take over from Brother Öman as branch overseer. A month later, Brother Anderson arrived in Norway, and in February he was appointed branch overseer. With World War II behind them, Jehovah's servants throughout Norway set out in the ministry with renewed vigor, confident of Jehovah's blessing.



**Marvin Anderson**  
*with his wife, Karen*

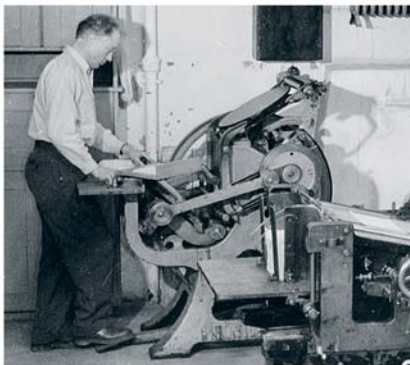
## JEHOVAH'S ORGANIZATION ON THE MOVE

By the time Marvin Anderson arrived in Norway, the branch was bustling with activity. In September 1945, the publishers were supplied with one booklet in Norwegian and four in Swedish. The following month, the October 1, 1945, *Watchtower* was published in Norwegian, as were more publications in time.

An amusing situation illustrates the value of having literature in the Norwegian language. One of the Swedish booklets was entitled *Hopp*—Swedish for “hope.” However, in Norwegian, “hopp” means “jump,” or “hop.” Publishers had to explain that their message of hope did not require readers to jump!

When Brother Anderson became branch overseer in 1946, the branch office was very cramped, thus he stayed in a room with five other brothers. Non-Witness occupants who had been living in the building since the Nazi era had to be relocated to make room for the growing Bethel family.

Brother Anderson energetically went to work in his new assignment. The branch office was renovated, and new equipment was obtained, including a foot-powered printing press. In 1946 an exciting new school was initiated in the congregations—the Theocratic Ministry School. At last, more brothers could be trained



***The foot-powered  
printing press***



**1946 convention in Bergen**

to prepare and deliver talks, and soon many of them qualified to be public speakers.

The first conventions after the war were held in Oslo, Bergen, and Trondheim in September and October of 1946. In all, at the three sites, 3,011 attended the public talk “The Prince of Peace,” and 52 were baptized—thrilling figures considering that there were only 766 publishers in Norway at the time.

In December 1946, after an interruption of more than five years, the circuit work was resumed. A number of young brothers, some of whom had served at Bethel, were assigned as circuit overseers (then called servants to the brethren). One of their primary objectives was to train the publishers in the house-to-house ministry, and they tried to work with as many as possible in each congregation. Gunnar Marcussen, one of the young circuit overseers at the time, relates that in some congregations he worked with between 50 and 70 publishers during a week-long visit. Gradually,

the publishers became more skilled in presenting the Kingdom message, and they ceased using testimony cards and phonographs, which had been used since the 1930's. Greater attention was also given to making return visits and conducting Bible studies.

### **PROMOTING PIONEER SERVICE**

After the war, publishers were encouraged to enroll as pioneers to help the growing number of those who were showing an interest in the Kingdom message. Consequently, several publishers who had stopped pioneering when our work was banned in 1941 now resumed full-time service. Though economic conditions were difficult, 47 brothers and sisters had begun pioneering by the end of 1946.

One of those pioneers was Svanhild Neraal, a sister who traveled north to the county of Finnmark in 1946. Svanhild had pioneered there in 1941 with Solveig Løvås and had experienced the bombing of both Kirkenes and Vardø. Svanhild could not forget the interested people she and Solveig had met, so she re-

turned to Kirkenes, now devastated by the war. Local people thought Svanhild was out of her mind, going to that area without even a place to stay.

Nevertheless, Svanhild trusted in Jehovah, and during the first winter, she slept on the kitch-



***Svanhild Neraal, 1961***



en floor of a small house where five other people lived. Postwar conditions were extremely difficult, and she endured many hardships. Often she waited in the snow and icy rain for boats that did not arrive as scheduled, if they came at all.

Svanhild had many interesting experiences preaching to the Sami people. If she was not able to get out to their isolated communities by bus, she went by riverboat or by bicycle. Hospitable Sami often invited her into their tents made from reindeer hides and listened intently as she witnessed with the help of interpreters. At mealtimes they invited her to share their meal of reindeer meat. Some who heard the good news from Svanhild later accepted the truth.

Kjell Husby, who was serving at Bethel at that time, said that the branch always knew where Svanhild was, simply by the addresses of the subscriptions that she submitted. In the three years she was in Finnmark, she obtained 2,000 subscriptions for *The Watchtower* and placed 2,500 books!

### **“FISHERS OF MEN”**

After the war, congregation publishers also shared eagerly in the preaching work, with heart-warming results. During the war, Dag Jensen, mentioned earlier, had preached to friends and relatives in the little village of Hennes in Vesterålen. Many showed interest and studied the Bible using our literature. When the war ended in 1945, Dag was baptized. The following year, when a congregation was established in Hennes, 16 individuals were baptized at Dag's home. Five years later, the congregation had about 50 publishers, and in 1971, Dag reported that



## Preaching on Level Ground

RANDI HUSBY

**BORN** 1922    **BAPTIZED** 1946

**PROFILE** In full-time service  
since 1946.

■ RANDI'S parents were baptized as Jehovah's Witnesses in 1938, and later, Randi took a stand for the truth. In 1946, she accepted an invitation to serve at Bethel, where she met a young brother named Kjell Husby. She and Kjell courted, married, and entered the pioneer ministry. They had a spiritually rich life together in various forms of full-time service until Kjell's death in 2010.

In recent years, problems with Randi's legs have made it difficult for her to climb stairs or walk up steep inclines. But she manages reasonably well on level ground and is often seen witnessing on the streets and in stores in Trondheim. To share the good news with everyone she meets, Randi makes sure that she carries literature in no less than eight languages. Also, Randi's friends in the congregation drive her to numerous people who regularly accept the latest magazines from her.

Randi does not have the strength to do as much as she used to. But she continues to find joy and satisfaction in her whole-souled service, knowing that Jehovah does not 'forget her work and the love she has shown for his name.'—Heb. 6:10.

more than 20 from that congregation had started to pioneer.

Dag's love for Jehovah and his zeal for the ministry were contagious. "When Dag walked into a home," recalls Åshild Rønning, who grew up in the congregation, "you could not fail to see his happy and enthusiastic disposition. It was like having the sun in the house." Dag was always very encouraging to children, such as when they had assignments in the Theocratic Ministry School. "He made us feel that what we did was important," says Åshild. With that kind encouragement, Åshild herself started pioneering in 1962 and has also had the joy of sharing "the glorious good news of the happy God," Jehovah, with others.—1 Tim. 1:11.

Why did so many from this place become zealous Witnesses? Although most in the small community were not churchgoers, they believed in God and the Bible. Moreover, many of the Witnesses were known in the community as good family heads who had the support of their loyal wives. One of these family heads was Arnulf Jensen, Dag's nephew, who was baptized in 1947. On weekdays, he earned a living as a fisherman, going out to sea in his fishing boat for several days at a time. But every Friday evening, he came home, even if the fishing was good and other fishermen stayed out to make more money. Arnulf made sure that he

***Arnulf's boat was often  
used for the ministry***



was at home on the weekends to attend the meetings and take part in the preaching work with his wife and their eight children—all of whom took a firm stand for the truth. On Saturdays and Sundays, the brothers carried out their commission to be “fishers of men,” often using Arnulf’s boat to do a spiritual fishing work in remote communities.—Mark 1:16-18.

### **“WE CARRY OUT AN IMPORTANT WORK”**

The missionary training given at the Watchtower Bible School of Gilead in New York has been of great benefit to the brotherhood in Norway. Hans Peter Hemstad and Gunnar Marcussen, who graduated from Gilead in 1948, were the first two students from here. They were assigned to Norway and served in the traveling work and at Bethel, first as single men and later with their wives. From 1948 to 2010, about 45 from Norway graduated from Gilead School. More than half of them were assigned to Norway and have served as full-time preachers or traveling overseers or as members of the Bethel family.

Among other early Gilead-trained missionaries to arrive in Norway were Andreas Hansen from Denmark and Kalevi Korttila from Finland. In 1951 they were sent to East Finnmark, where they covered great distances by boat, by bicycle, and on skis. Often, they built on the spiritual foundation that Svanhild Neraal had laid some years before. As a result, after just one year, the number of publishers in their territory increased from 3 to 15!

Kjell Martinsen from Hennes in Vesterålen graduated from Gilead in 1953 and was assigned to Norway. At 22 years of age, he was sent out in the travel-



***Gunnar Marcussen (1) and Hans Peter Hemstad (2)  
were the first students from Norway to graduate from Gilead***

ing work in Vestfold and Telemark. Though he found it to be intimidating to serve as a traveling overseer at such a young age, he has many happy memories of the warm welcome and loyal cooperation he received from more-experienced brothers. Kjell served as a traveling overseer until 2001 when, with his wife, Jorunn, he settled in Svolvær in Lofoten to serve as a pioneer.

Karen Christensen came from Denmark in 1950 to pioneer in Egersund and Kongsvinger, where there were no congregations. She covered the territory on her bicycle. After graduating from Gilead in 1954, she was sent to Kongsberg. In 1956 she married Marvin Anderson and has served at Bethel since then. Karen has now enjoyed more than 60 years in the full-time

ministry. “We are not important people,” Karen acknowledges, “but we carry out an important work.”

### LEGAL MILESTONES

From 1948 to 1951, the increase was particularly good. In 1951, there was an increase of 29 percent in the average number of publishers, reaching a peak of 2,066. At the same time, however, Jehovah’s servants in Norway faced some legal challenges.

The case that attracted the most attention was in connection with street witnessing with *The Watchtower*. In November 1949, some publishers who were doing street work in Oslo were taken to the police station and then let go after a few hours. Undaunted, the Witnesses did street work again the following weekend. Then, on December 6, 1949, all the publishers who were doing street work in Oslo were arrested. They were told that they were not allowed to offer the magazines on the street without police permission. The police claimed that their work could cause congestion and disturbances and obstruct the flow of traffic. Seven of the publishers were questioned and taken to court, where they were required to pay a small fine or were sentenced to three days in jail.

Because this was not just a matter of obtaining police clearance but involved the right to exercise their religious beliefs freely, the brothers appealed the case to Norway’s Supreme Court. In the newspaper *Dagbladet*, Jehovah’s Witnesses’ news representative John Roos pointed out that our street witnessing had never caused any disturbance. “If religious preaching is carried out on the street without disturbance of the peace, without obstructing the traffic, and without causing crowds,” he reasoned, “is it necessary to

ask for the permission of the police? Or does freedom of religion give any citizen the right to such preaching?" While waiting for the Supreme Court's decision, the Witnesses continued doing street work in spite of continued arrests and increasing fines. Some publishers were arrested up to ten times.

On June 17, 1950, the Supreme Court reversed the city court's decision, and the publishers were acquitted! This and other favorable decisions confirmed that Jehovah's Witnesses have the legal right in Norway to offer Bible literature, both on the streets and from house to house, without asking for police permission.

### **MEMORABLE CONVENTIONS**

In the 1950's and 1960's, many memorable conventions strengthened the organization and drew the Witnesses closer together. Nathan H. Knorr and Milton G. Henschel, from the world headquarters, were two of the speakers at the national convention held in Lillehammer in 1951. Delegates flocked to the convention from all parts of the country. How excited the delegates were to see 89 baptized and to have 2,391 present at the public talk! In subsequent years delegates from Norway were thrilled to attend international conventions in London and New York. Then, in 1955, about 2,000 Norwegian Witnesses attended an international convention in Stockholm, Sweden.

The 1965 "Word of Truth" international assembly held in Oslo at the Ullevål Stadium was certainly a highlight. There was, however, a challenge. Norway's national soccer team was playing against another national team in the stadium the evening before the program was to begin. An army of Witnesses waited



***Tent camp for the “Word of Truth” international assembly***

outside the gates until the soccer enthusiasts departed, and then they swarmed in to prepare the stadium for the assembly. They labored all through the night—cleaning, removing garbage, and erecting food-service tents. They also built platforms, a music pavilion and, for decoration, a storehouse and three cabins—all with turf roofs. “Miracle during the night,” wrote the newspaper *Dagbladet*. “Ullevål Stadium transformed into idyllic countryside . . . Unbelievable efforts by Jehovah’s Witnesses.”

The hospitable Norwegian brothers and sisters accommodated more than 7,000 foreign delegates, most of them from Denmark. A tent camp was set up in a field just outside the city. It was ideal while the weather held. However, the 6,000 who camped there will not quickly forget the rain, which turned the ground into a quagmire during the first days of the assembly. Everyone was grateful when the weather improved for the last two days. Despite the unpleasant weather, local and visiting delegates basked in the warmth of happy Christian association, and they were refreshed by the timely spiritual program. How delighted they



were to have 199 baptized and a record attendance of 12,332 for the public talk given by Brother Knorr!

### **“WITNESSING IS OUR LIFEBLOOD”**

In addition to witnessing from house to house and on the streets, many brothers and sisters have enjoyed good results when witnessing informally. In 1936, Konrad Flatøy, who worked as a stoker on a ship, offered the mate a booklet. The mate, Paul Bruun, accepted the booklet and read it the same night.

“I immediately realized that this was the truth,” Paul said, “and the booklet showed me the difference between true and false religion.” As Paul learned more, he started to witness to others, and during the war, he conducted a Bible study with an interested sailor. As the sailor’s Bible knowledge increased, he felt that he could not operate the onboard machine guns. When the authorities found out about the sailor’s stand, they ordered Paul to stop the Bible study. He refused, so both he and the sailor were put ashore in London. A month later, that ship sank after being hit by a torpedo. Subsequently, the sailor went on to become a baptized brother and Paul was invited to attend Gilead missionary school. After graduating in 1954, Paul was sent to the Philippines as a missionary. Later he returned to Norway and served as a circuit overseer, with the support of his wife, Grethe.

***Paul Bruun***



In 1948, Holger Abrahamsen worked transporting workers to and from a big dredge in Narvik harbor. His motto was, "Witnessing is our lifeblood; without it, we are dead." So Holger never missed an opportunity to witness to his passengers. One such passenger, Olvar Djupvik, became interested and told his fiancée, Anne Lise, about the Paradise hope. Both got baptized, and later they raised their four sons as servants of Jehovah. One of them, Hermann, served as a missionary in Bolivia with his wife, Laila. Hermann and Laila returned to Norway and are now serving in the traveling work here.

### **TAKING CARE OF JEHOVAH'S SHEEP**

During the 1960's and 1970's, important organizational adjustments were made at the branch office and in the congregations. Roar Hagen followed Marvin Anderson as the branch overseer. Then, in 1969, Thor Samuelson was assigned to oversee the branch. In 1976, a Branch Committee was appointed to take oversight of the branch, with Thor Samuelson, Kåre Fjelltveit, and Niels Petersen being the first members of the Norway Branch Committee.

In October 1972, bodies of elders were appointed to serve as spiritual shepherds in the congregations. Mature men in the congregations were helped to qualify to shepherd the many new ones who were accepting Bible truth. Since then, Jehovah has blessed his people richly as they have served loyally under his loving oversight.

### **THE SAMI RESPOND TO THE GOOD NEWS**

For several decades, many pioneers and others have preached the good news to the Sami people, in-

cluding reindeer herders deep in the mountain plateau of Finnmarksvidda. Although most Sami speak Norwegian, publishers at times have had to use interpreters. One of the first Witnesses who preached extensively in the Sami language was Aksel Falsnes, who was partly of Sami origin and spoke Sami, Norwegian, and Finnish. His sister, who lived in southern Norway, had come into the truth and had sent him one of our publications, which he read with great interest. There were no Witnesses in the part of Troms where he lived, but in 1968 some pioneers and a circuit overseer visited Aksel and helped him make spiritual progress.

Aksel proved to be a zealous publisher. He often put his bicycle in his rowboat early in the morning, rowed across the fjord, and then used his bicycle to get from one community to another. With his knowledge of the Sami language, Aksel was able to give a good witness to Sami people in the far reaches of Finnmark.

Aksel was a hardy person, and he traveled long distances on skis to reach isolated homes. For example, late one winter he skied from Karasjok across a mountain plateau to Kautokeino and then on to Alta. All he could take with him was a simple backpack with a few personal items and some literature. After a few weeks, he arrived at the home of friends in Alta, having covered the entire distance of about 250 miles on skis!



In the early 1970's, several Sami came into the truth. In Hammerfest, a Sami woman and her husband began studying with Jehovah's Witnesses. Soon, some of her relatives in Alta became interested. Arne and Marie Ann Milde, special pioneers in Alta, started a Bible study with these sincere people and often had 10 or 12 in attendance at the study. Eventually, about half of them became Witnesses.

"It is a challenge to preach in the Sami territory," says Hartvig Mienna, a Sami pioneer in Alta who uses his snowmobile to reach isolated people. "The distances are great, and many of the people are bound by their tradition. But they are hospitable, and we have been able to start several Bible studies with them."

### **YEARS OF EAGER ANTICIPATION**

There was a steady increase in publishers from the mid-1960's till the mid-1970's. But expectations regarding the year 1975 proved to be a test of faith for some brothers. When the great tribulation did not come in 1975, a few left the organization; and between 1976 and 1980, there was a slight decrease in pub-

***Hartvig Mienna and other  
publishers using snowmobiles  
when preaching to the Sami***



lishers. Others who felt disappointed slowed down in their Christian activity for a while. How, though, did the majority feel about continuing in their service to Jehovah?

“There was anticipation and some excitement with regard to 1975,” admitted Hans Jakob Lilletvedt, “but my faith did not depend on it.”

“We did not dedicate ourselves to Jehovah with a particular date in mind, so we just moved on without making any changes,” said faithful, longtime Witnesses, John and Edith Johansen.

“I am going to serve Jehovah forever,” reasoned Lea Sørensen. “Whether the end comes in 1975 or later is not important.”

### **A NEW BRANCH OFFICE**

The workload at the branch increased toward the end of the 1970's. Thus, more Bethelites were needed as well as additional residential and work space. Consequently, in 1979 the Governing Body approved plans to build a new branch office outside Oslo. Toward the end of 1980, the brothers found a well-suited site at Ytre Enebakk, about 20 miles from the center of Oslo.

In order to keep construction costs to a minimum, volunteers were invited to build the complex. It was quite a challenge to acquire construction equipment, provide food and accommodations for nearly 100 people, and coordinate the entire project.

A total of more than 2,000 local and foreign brothers and sisters ‘offered themselves freely.’ (Ps. 110:3, ftn.) Many helped out by donating potatoes, vegetables, fruit, bread, eggs, fish, clothing, and equipment. Some felled trees in the forest, while others cut the

logs into planks at the small sawmill on the construction site. Countless others helped by making loans and giving monetary contributions.

Some skilled workers could help only for a limited time, and much of the work had to be done by unskilled volunteers. John Johnson, who was responsible for all electrical installations, describes how inadequate he and other construction overseers felt. “The volunteers learned how to do the work and did a remarkable job,” says John. “It was amazing to see how problems were solved and how it all turned out. It was evident that Jehovah God was directing the construction.”

Thanks to the diligence of the volunteers, the generosity of the brothers and sisters, and the blessing of Jehovah, the work proceeded well. Construction started early in 1981, and on May 19, 1984, during the vis-

### ***Branch construction began in 1981***



it of Milton Henschel of the Governing Body, the new branch office was dedicated. The construction project itself was a source of great joy and brought the Norwegian brothers closer together. In the years after the building project, many of the construction volunteers enrolled as auxiliary or regular pioneers.

### **SPEEDING UP KINGDOM HALL CONSTRUCTION**

It was back in 1928 that four of the Fjelltvædt brothers constructed the first hall for Jehovah's worshippers in a suburb in Bergen. By the beginning of the 1980's, several congregations had built or purchased their own Kingdom Halls. But many congregations were still conducting meetings in unsuitable rented halls. During the branch construction, some brothers discussed how they could speed up the construction of Kingdom Halls. They knew that teams of brothers in the United States and Canada were

***The branch office today***



erecting quickly built Kingdom Halls, and they wondered, 'If the brothers over there can do it with Jehovah's help, why can't we?'

Some brothers worked on drawings and formulated specific details, and after a pilot project in Askim in 1983, they erected three quickly built Kingdom Halls in 1984—in Rørvik, Steinkjer, and Alta. How did they do it? Basically, by preparing the foundations in advance and then by carefully coordinating the volunteers—skilled and unskilled—in such a way that the various phases of construction could be completed in just a few days.

During the next ten years, about 80 quickly built Kingdom Halls were constructed in Norway. Later, Norwegian brothers traveled to Iceland to help build three Kingdom Halls. Even though most of the congregations in Norway now have their own Kingdom Hall, there is still much to do in this field. Old halls need to be renovated, some halls need to be expanded, and new halls still need to be built.

### **"THE BROTHERHOOD HAS BEEN STRENGTHENED"**

Kingdom Hall construction has provided practical and attractive places of worship, and it has given a good witness to local communities. For example, three brothers met with city officials in Fredrikstad to arrange the construction of a Kingdom Hall in 1987. The officials laughed when the brothers said that they would complete the hall in three days. But even on the first day, Friday, it became apparent to the officials that the Witnesses would complete the hall as planned. On Saturday one of the officials brought his brass band to the construction site and had them play music for the volunteer workers—his way of apol-





***Oslo Assembly Hall***

ogizing for his earlier skepticism. “It is incredible that you Witnesses can build so quickly,” said one woman who watched the Arendal Kingdom Hall being built in 1990, “but it is even more amazing to see all these smiling and cheerful people.”

Today there are two Regional Building Committees that supervise Kingdom Hall construction throughout Norway. Willing brothers and sisters have also made themselves available for bigger and more demanding building projects. For example, in 1991 and 1992, the brothers had to expand the branch office. And in 1994, they built a beautiful Assembly Hall in Oslo. In 2003, a construction team erected a large Kingdom Hall in Bergen, which can be used for congregation meetings as well as assemblies.

The cooperation and unity of purpose these projects engender have also had a good effect on

Jehovah's servants. "This has helped the congregations to be even more close-knit," says a brother who has helped with Kingdom Hall construction since 1983. "The brotherhood has been strengthened—strong bonds of friendship have been formed and our ability to work together has improved."

### **INCREASED ACTIVITY AT BETHEL**

After the new branch office was completed, it was possible to increase the staff and do more to benefit the preaching work in Norway. For example, an increasing amount of literature has been translated into Norwegian. A milestone was reached when the entire *New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures* was published in Norwegian in 1996. (The *New World Translation of the Christian Greek Scriptures* had already been released in 1991.) Now virtually all literature published by Jehovah's Witnesses is available in Norwegian, including the reference work *Insight on the Scriptures*.

The new branch facilities also included a much-needed recording studio. Beginning in the 1960's, convention dramas were recorded in Kingdom Halls and in the attic and the basement of the previous branch building. Conditions for recording were not ideal, and it was often necessary to interrupt recordings because of traffic noise. But the recording studio in the new facilities has greatly expedited the production of dramas, videos, and vocal renditions of our Kingdom songs. The branch also produces recordings of *The Watchtower* and *Awake!* in Norwegian and has made the entire Bible and several other books available on CD and on the Web site [www.jw.org](http://www.jw.org).

# He Experienced the Transforming Power of God's Word

VIKTOR UGLEBAKKEN

**BORN** 1953    **BAPTIZED** 1981


**PROFILE** A former criminal who broke free from demon harassment and drug abuse.



■ VIKTOR started to use hashish and other drugs as a youth and drifted into a life of crime. He had always been interested in the Bible, and in 1979, tired of his rough life, he wondered if God's Word could help him. However, his investigation into various religions left him feeling frustrated and dissatisfied.

Eventually, weighed down with depression, Viktor contemplated suicide. Then, he received a letter from his cousin in Bergen who had begun studying with Jehovah's Witnesses. Viktor went to Bergen and joined the study. At first, he tried to prove that the Witnesses were wrong. But because he had always been concerned about the environment, he was happy to learn that God will "bring to ruin those ruining the earth" and will transform our planet into a paradise.—Rev. 11:18.

Viktor immediately started attending meetings with his cousin, and he was impressed by the kindness and hospitality he observed at the Kingdom Hall and in the homes of the Witnesses. What he heard and saw convinced him that he had to change his life and stop taking drugs. As a result of his persistent, heartfelt prayers, Viktor experienced the transforming power of God's Word and holy spirit.—Luke 11:9, 13; Heb. 4:12.



Viktor's path to baptism was not easy. Only with Jehovah's help was he able to break free from the harassment of the demons and recover from two relapses with drugs. He was helped when an elder reassured him that "as a father shows mercy to his sons, Jehovah [shows] mercy to those fearing him." (Ps. 103:13) Viktor continued to grow spiritually and was baptized in 1981. He still needed to serve a prison sentence for a past crime, but soon after he was released, he started to pioneer. Since then, he has had the joy of helping many others to become servants of Jehovah. He has been particularly successful when preaching in prisons, and two of the inmates with whom he studied have come into the truth.

Viktor has established himself as a reliable family head and elder. He continues to serve as a pioneer along with his wife, Tone, and their son. "The ministry was one of the things that changed me," Viktor now says. "I am deeply grateful to Jehovah that I can pass on precious spiritual treasures to others."



## SERVING WHERE THEY WERE NEEDED MORE

While congregation publishers preach in their own neighborhoods, many publishers and pioneers have traveled to unassigned territories as far north as Longyearbyen on the Svalbard archipelago. Some publishers have moved to various remote places to proclaim the good news and, where possible, help to establish congregations.

When Finn and Tordis Jenssen got married in 1950, they knew that there was a need for publishers in Hammerfest, one of the northernmost cities in the world. Finn and Tordis did not have much money; but they had strength and determination, and they had bicycles. So they set out on their bicycles from Bodø to Hammerfest, a trip of about 560 miles. When they had covered about half the distance, some friends kindly helped them monetarily so that they could do the rest of their journey by boat. In Hammerfest, Finn and Tordis got busy preaching and inviting people to the public talks that Finn gave each weekend. Jehovah blessed their diligent efforts, and soon they were able to form a small congregation.

One of the speakers at the district convention in Trondheim in 1957 encouraged publishers to consider moving to a place where there was a need for preachers. Viggo and Karen Markussen, who lived in Stavanger, were paying careful attention, and Viggo nudged Karen with his elbow. Karen immediately realized the implication of that. 'Our days in Stavanger are numbered,' she thought. But what would their three daughters, all of whom were publishers between the ages of 11 and 14, think of a move?



# He Wanted to Do Something Better

**TOM FRISVOLD**

**BORN 1962    BAPTIZED 1983**

**PROFILE** A soccer player who wanted to serve Jehovah.

■ WHEN he was 20, Tom had a promising career playing soccer for one of Norway's best teams. Tom's mother was already one of Jehovah's Witnesses. One day, a young pioneer who came to visit Tom's mother offered him a Bible study. Tom accepted but pointed out that he had no intention of becoming a Witness.

Tom was touched by the warm welcome he received when he started attending meetings. He also noticed that everyone looked up the scriptures during the program. "It must be the Bible that makes these people so nice," Tom reasoned.

Eventually, Tom was sure that he had found the truth and that he wanted to serve Jehovah. How, though, would he persuade his soccer team to release one of their promising players? Amazingly, after he explained to the soccer management that he wanted to use his life for something better than soccer, they released him from his contract.

Tom was baptized in 1983 and began pioneering in 1985. In 1987 he moved to Hammerfest with Viktor Uglebakken in order to help out where the need was greater. Later, Tom was appointed as a circuit overseer, and he now serves at Bethel with his wife, Kristina.

When the Markussens discussed the talk after the convention, the whole family agreed that they could make themselves available to serve where there was a greater need. In response to their correspondence, the branch office asked them to move to Brumunddal, where there was no congregation. Thus, in 1958, Viggo and Karen sold their modern house, Viggo sold his furniture shop, and the family moved to a simple log cabin close to Brumunddal. Jehovah blessed their self-sacrificing spirit, and in the following years, many of those with whom they studied came into the truth. By the time the girls left home and Viggo and Karen were assigned to serve in the circuit work, there was a zealous little congregation of about 40 publishers in Brumunddal.

Young single brothers have also been able to advance Kingdom interests by moving to places where there was no congregation. In 1992 a group of pioneer brothers, most of them about 19 years of age, moved to Måløy, in Nord Fjord, to follow up interest that had been shown there. They got busy in the preaching work and immediately started conducting meetings in their rented house. A newly interested woman with whom they studied was very hospitable and became like a mother to the young brothers. Later, an elder and his wife moved to Måløy and a congregation was established. The young brothers had a wonderful time in their assignment, conducting many Bible studies, caring for numerous congregation assignments, and strengthening the vibrant new congregation. "That was a spiritual adventure and a unique opportunity to grow spiritually," one of the young brothers said. As a result of the hard work

of these and others, there are now about 30 publishers in the Nord Fjord Congregation, and they conduct between 50 and 60 Bible studies.

### **WITNESSING IN OTHER LANGUAGES**

In the past 20 years or more, there has been a steady increase in the number of immigrants living in Norway. Congregations have therefore made a concerted effort to witness to them in their own language or in a language they understand. The first foreign-language congregation in Norway, established in 1986, was called the Oslo Latin Congregation, because it hosted both Spanish- and Portuguese-speaking people, mostly from Latin America. About the same time, some publishers started organized witnessing to English-speaking people in the Oslo area. The publishers met many interested ones, especially from Africa and Asia. Some they found while doing street work; others they met at refugee reception centers. They also made good use of telephone directories to find people with foreign names who might speak English. Many Bible studies were started, and in 1990, the Oslo English Congregation was formed.

Since then, many Norwegian publishers have endeavored to learn foreign languages. Together with publishers of foreign origin, they have helped to establish groups or congregations for people who speak Arabic, Chinese, English, Persian, Polish, Punjabi, Russian, Serbo-Croatian, Spanish, Tagalog, Tamil, and Tigrinya.

The sign-language field has also experienced fine growth. There are a few thousand deaf people who use Norwegian Sign Language, and the organization



is working hard to help them. In the 1970's, brothers started interpreting some meetings, assemblies, and conventions into sign language, and since then, several publishers have learned to sign. Sign-language groups have been established in some congregations, and in 2008 the first sign-language congregation was established in Oslo. Nationwide, there are about 25 deaf publishers, who make good use of the publications that have been translated into Norwegian Sign Language and are available on DVD.

### **HOSPITAL LIAISON COMMITTEES**

Because Jehovah's Witnesses do not accept blood transfusions, it has sometimes been difficult for Witness patients to receive the medical treatment that they need and are willing to accept. In order to assist Witnesses in such situations and provide information about alternative treatments, the organization established Hospital Liaison Committees (HLC) in Norway in 1990. From 1990 to 2010, the brothers on the Oslo HLC held about 70 meetings with medical staff at hospitals in their area and provided assistance in more than 500 individual cases. Their diligent efforts have helped them contact many cooperative doctors, and the medical information the HLCs have provided has moved more doctors to use alternatives to blood transfusions. The helpful support provided by Patient Visitation Groups is also very much appreciated by patients and their families.

Illustrating the value of the HLC arrangement is the experience of Helen, a young pioneer sister. In 2007 she became seriously ill and was sent to a local hospital. Her blood count was dropping rapidly, and the medical personnel put pressure on her to accept

a blood transfusion, saying that a transfusion was the only thing that could save her life. With the help of a member of the HLC, she was transferred to a hospital that was larger and better-equipped. When Helen and her mother arrived, a brother from the HLC was there to meet them, provide reassurance, and help them get the needed care. The hospital agreed to give Helen a treatment that stimulates the production of red blood cells. Within a few days, her blood count improved, and soon she was out of danger. Now Helen is in good health again, and she appreciates the fact that the hospital respected her deeply held convictions. Helen and her mother say, "Seeing how Jehovah's organization functions and how the brothers and sisters supported us and prayed for us is something that we will always be grateful for and will never forget."

### **COUNTERACTING A MALICIOUS MEDIA ATTACK**

Especially between 1989 and 1992, Jehovah's Witnesses in Norway were objects of a smear campaign and much negative publicity in newspapers and magazines as well as on radio and TV. One of the main reasons for the opposition was our adherence to what the Bible says about the treatment of disfellowshipped ones. (1 Cor. 5:9-13; 2 John 10) Because of the negative publicity, Witnesses endured unpleasant encounters in the ministry, at work, at school, and also with family members. Although Jesus' followers are not surprised when they are reproached, the situation was not easy to cope with. —Matt. 5:11, 12.

"This was a difficult period," explains one brother, "but it had benefits too. It made me review the Scrip-

tural basis for my beliefs. It was faith-strengthening to reflect on the good spiritual food we receive from the faithful and discreet slave. As a result, I think that we have been fortified to face tests of faith.”

“It was inspiring to see the courage of the brothers and sisters in that period,” recalls a circuit overseer. “We realized that the best response we could give was to devote ourselves even more to the field ministry, including street witnessing. Happily, many Witnesses responded in a positive way.”

Note how, in contrast with the unscriptural thinking promoted by the media, one formerly disfellowshipped person felt about the Bible’s direction on disfellowshipping. “When I was disfellowshipped at 20 years of age,” says Fred, “I started to think seriously about my life. The situation was not pleasant, but the disfellowshipping action had a positive effect. It was as if Jehovah were saying to me: ‘Now you must pull yourself together, son! Unless you mend your ways, you will fare badly.’ It was a necessary lesson that made me abandon my sinful course. Instead of being occupied with excitement and fun, I began to take the truth seriously. In addition, some of my friends developed a more wholesome attitude.” Happily, Fred repented, changed his ways, and was reinstated. He now serves as an elder.

**‘Now you must pull yourself together, son! Unless you mend your ways, you will fare badly’**

### **“READY TO FACE JEHOVAH’S DAY”**

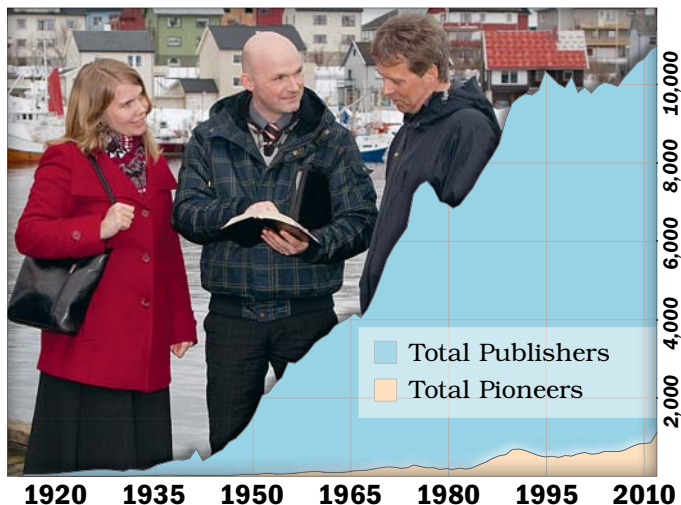
In spite of widespread materialism and increasing apathy in the territory, Jehovah’s servants have continued giving priority to faith-strengthening spiritual

activities, such as daily Bible reading and attendance at congregation meetings. A growing number of publishers have increased their share in the ministry by enrolling as regular pioneers. One brother expressed the sentiments of many when he said: "If I am not ready to face Jehovah's day tomorrow, I will not be ready the day it does come. We just have to keep moving ahead. It will come one day." It is no doubt this sort of attitude that has contributed to the steady growth apparent since 2001.

A spiritual provision that has had a stimulating effect on the congregations and has given many brothers fine theocratic education is the Ministerial Training School (now called the Bible School for Single Brothers). "The opportunity to study the Bible so intensely for eight weeks," reflects one student, "let me experience the truth in a way that I had never experienced it before. Everything in the Bible became much more vivid and real to me!" In the past two decades here, more than 60 graduates have helped strengthen congregations and stir them to increased activity.

### **RAISED AS JEHOVAH'S WITNESSES**

Many who have been baptized as Jehovah's Witnesses over the years learned Bible truths from their parents. Some Norwegian publishers are third-, fourth-, or fifth-generation Witnesses. "I have often reflected on how fortunate I was to be born into a family that gave priority to serving Jehovah," says Ivan Gåsodden, a great-grandson of Ingebret Andersen, the first Bible Student in Skien. "Personal study, regular Bible reading, and good friends who shared my goals helped me take a stand for the truth." Ivan's



sons, André and Richard, also cherish their spiritual heritage as one of their most precious possessions.

“I am very grateful for how my life started out,” says pioneer Bente Bu, a granddaughter of Magnus Randal, who served on the pioneer boat *Ruth*. “Starting life this way spared me many problems, and I want to use my life for the benefit of others.”

Some who had a spiritually weak period in their youth have subsequently become devoted Witnesses of Jehovah as adults. Thomas and Serine Fauskanger from Bergen, for example, were both raised by Christian parents, but their spiritual progress was slow. What helped them to change the way they viewed worshipping Jehovah?

“In 2002 a young brother who had gone through the Ministerial Training School came to our

congregation,” relates Thomas. “He helped me to get involved in the ministry and to pursue spiritual goals.”

When Thomas was 25, he married Serine, and in 2007 they moved to Båtsfjord, Finnmark, to help a pioneer couple take care of the spiritual interest there. Soon, Thomas and Serine also became pioneers. In 2009 they spent three months in unassigned territory in the fishing village of Kjøllefjord, where they and some publishers who accompanied them started more than 30 Bible studies. Thomas and Serine then moved closer to Kjøllefjord to help cultivate the interest. Now they regularly drive about three and a half hours each way to help interested ones. Their lives are full, but Serine says: “My life is now uncomplicated and happy. We have few things but also few problems.”

***Bible instruction within the family has resulted in generations of faithful servants of Jehovah***



## LOOKING FORWARD WITH FAITH IN JEHOVAH

Life has changed considerably since the Bible Student Knud P. Hammer and others began to preach in Norway. At first, Jehovah's servants stood out because they taught Bible truth in a religious society that was dominated by churches wielding great influence and teaching false doctrines. Over the decades, countless sincere people were delighted to learn about the Bible and readily took a stand for true worship.

Now, the religious climate in Norway has changed. Fewer people believe in God, and it is considered presumptuous to claim that there is only one true religion. It takes time and effort for interested ones to acquire Bible knowledge and build up their faith in God and the Bible. It often takes longer to learn how to live by Bible standards. Nevertheless, Jehovah continues to draw sincere individuals, whether they live in isolated fishing villages or in modern multistory apartment buildings in crowded cities.—John 6:44.

As is the case all around the world, Jehovah's Witnesses in Norway treasure their "privilege of fearlessly rendering sacred service" to the Sovereign Lord, Jehovah. (Luke 1:74) As they scour this vast territory for righteously disposed people, they get glimpses of the awe-inspiring, paradisaic beauty and serenity that the Creator has purposed for the entire earth. Along with their loyal brothers and sisters earth wide, Jehovah's worshippers in Norway eagerly anticipate the day when God's Kingdom will carry out the divine will in every corner of our exquisite planet.—Dan. 2:44; Matt. 6:10.

# TIME LINE

## Norway

Office is opened in Kristiania (Oslo). **1904**

C. T. Russell visits Norway. **1909 and 1911**

"Photo-Drama of Creation" draws large crowds. **1914-1915**

"Millions Now Living Will Never Die!" is given countrywide. **1920-1925**

Boats used to preach  
▼ in coastal communities. **1928-1940**

Witnessing continues despite wartime opposition. **1940-1945**

First Gilead-trained missionaries arrive. ▼ **1948**



New branch is dedicated. **1984**

Assembly Hall is dedicated in Oslo. **1994**

New peaks in regular and auxiliary pioneers, publishers, and Memorial attendees. **2011**

1900

1920

1940

1960

1980

2000



1890

- 1892 Knud Pederson Hammer begins preaching in Norway. ▶

- 1900 First congregation is formed.

- 1905 First assembly is held in Kristiania.

1910

- 1914 First traveling overseer is appointed.



- 1925 *The Golden Age (Awake!)* is published in Norwegian. ▶

1930

*The Watchtower* is published in Norwegian.

- 1945



1950

- 1950 Supreme Court upholds right to preach with literature.

- 1965 International convention held in Oslo.

1970

Hospital Liaison Committees are appointed.

- 1990

1990

- 1996 Complete *New World Translation* is released in Norwegian. ▶



2010

# Rwanda

RWANDA is one of the smallest countries in Africa. It is also one of the most beautiful. Known as the Land of a Thousand Hills, it has mountains, forests, lakes, and waterfalls, as well as a seemingly endless variety of plant and animal life. Dominating the mountainous region that borders Democratic Republic of the Congo\* to the west and Uganda to the north are the formidable Virunga Mountains. Mount Karisimbi, the highest in this range, is a dormant volcano some 14,700 feet high, which is often capped in white because of sleet and hail. Lower down, the slopes of these mountains are covered with thick bamboo growth and rain forest, where endangered golden monkeys swing effortlessly among the branches and vines. And it is here, too, in this luxuriant environment, that one of Rwanda's greatest treasures is found—the mountain gorilla.

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\* Commonly called Congo or Congo (Kinshasa) to distinguish it from neighboring Congo (Brazzaville). Throughout this account, we will use the name Congo.



Exotic plants and lush vegetation extend down to the shores of Lake Kivu and to the Nyungwe Forest. In this forest live chimpanzees, black-and-white colobus monkeys, and over 70 other mammals. There are about 270 species of tree here along with almost 300 bird species. Butterflies and orchids in rich abundance enhance the beauty of this protected area.

From the heart of the Nyungwe Forest, a small stream of water begins to trickle eastward. Gradually, it is joined by other streams and rivers before flowing into Lake Victoria. From there, the water rapidly descends, gaining momentum and strength to continue its long journey northward past Ethiopia, through Sudan, and finally into Egypt, where it empties into the Mediterranean Sea. From its lowly beginnings in the wooded hills of central Africa, this river, the Nile, covers a distance of nearly 4,240 miles, making it one of the longest rivers on earth.

### **TROUBLED TIMES**

Sadly, though, the tiny country of Rwanda has experienced appalling violence. Hundreds of thousands of men, women, and children were brutally

*Fishing on Lake Kivu*



# An Overview of Rwanda

**Land** Rwanda measures only 110 miles from north to south and 145 miles across. It has a population estimated at over 11,000,000 and is the most densely populated country in Africa. Kigali is the capital city.

**People** The population is made up of Hutu, Tutsi, and Twa, as well as some Asians and Europeans. Over half of the people are Roman Catholic, and over a quarter are Protestant, including many Adventists. Muslim and various local beliefs account for the remainder.

**Language** The official languages are Kinyarwanda, English, and French. Swahili is spoken as the language of commerce with neighboring countries.

**Livelihood** Most Rwandans are farmers. Since much of the soil is of poor quality, many can grow only enough for their own families. Tea, as well as pyrethrum—a plant used for insecticides—is grown, as is coffee, which is the country's main export.

**Food** Basic foods include potatoes, bananas, and beans.

**Climate** Even though Rwanda is near the equator, it enjoys a generally mild climate. Across the interior highlands, temperatures average 70 degrees Fahrenheit, and annual rainfall is about 45 inches.



DEMOCRATIC  
REPUBLIC OF  
CONGO

UGANDA

TANZANIA

RWANDA

BURUNDI

Nyiragongo  
Volcano

Karistimbi  
Volcano

VIRUNGA MTS.

Ruhengeri  
(now Musanze)

Goma

Gisenyi  
(now Rubavu)

Lake  
Kivu

KIGALI

Kanombe

Masaka

Bugesera

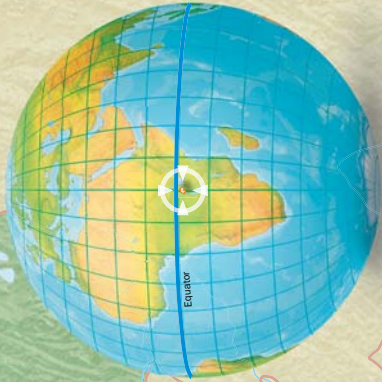
Gitarama  
(now Muhanga)

Nyabisindu  
(now Nyanza)

Save

Butare  
(now Huye)

Bukavu



slaughtered in one of the worst genocides seen in modern times. Shocking scenes of unbridled violence were broadcast earth wide, causing many to be horrified by man's inhumanity to man.—Eccl. 8:9.

How did Jehovah's faithful servants fare during those terrible times and the years that followed? Just as the seemingly insignificant stream of water coming from the Nyungwe Forest overcomes all obstacles, survives the oppressive heat of the African sun, and becomes a mighty river, so Jehovah's people in Rwanda have persevered in their service to God. They have withstood intense persecution and great difficulties and have become a source of strength and encouragement to their brothers and sisters worldwide. The story of Rwanda will touch your heart as you read moving accounts of love, faith, and loyalty. It is our hope that this account will encourage you to treasure your relationship with Jehovah even more highly and to cherish the Christian brotherhood more deeply.

### **EARLY GLIMMERS OF LIGHT**

The first report about the preaching of the good news within Rwanda came in the *1971 Yearbook of Jehovah's Witnesses*. It stated: "In March this year [1970] it was possible for two special pioneers to enter Rwanda and open up the preaching work in the capital city, Kigali. They have found the people warm and responsive to the Kingdom message, and one interested person has already started out in the service. The pioneers have already started ten studies among the limited number of people who speak Swahili. They are now trying very hard to learn the Kinyarwanda language so that they may give a wider witness."



The two special pioneers mentioned in that report were Oden Mwaisoba and his wife, Enea, from Tanzania. Because they did not yet know the local language, Kinyarwanda, they started by visiting Swahili-speaking people, many of whom had come from Congo or Tanzania. By February 1971, there were four publishers reporting, but none of our publications were available in Kinyarwanda, and the language problem slowed growth.

Stanley Makumba, an intrepid circuit overseer who was serving in Kenya, visited Rwanda for the first time in 1974. He recalls: "There were few buses going from the Uganda/Rwanda border post to Ruhengeri, Rwanda. I had to stand in a truck with no room to move my feet. My wife sat in the front seat with the driver. When we got to our destination, she could hardly recognize me because my face and hair were covered with dust. My back hurt so much as a result of the journey that I had to sit while giving talks for the next week leading up to the small circuit assembly and for the assembly itself. As for visiting the brothers, I could not tell them when I would arrive because we did not know what transportation would be available!"



***Oden and Enea  
Mwaisoba***

## RETURN OF A NATIVE

Meanwhile, Gaspard Rwakabubu, a native Rwandan, was working as a mechanic in the copper mines in Congo. He relates: "In 1974, I attended the Kingdom Ministry School in Kolwezi. One of the instructors, Michael Pottage, said that the branch office in Kinshasa was looking for a Rwandan elder who would be willing to return to his native country to help with the preaching work. Would I be willing to go? I said that I would talk it over with my wife, Melanie.

"At that time, my boss in the mining company had just given me an invitation to go to Germany for training. I had done well at work, and my salary was increasing regularly. However, it took us only a few days to decide. I told Brother Pottage that we would accept the invitation to return to Rwanda. My boss could not understand this decision. 'Why can you not be one of Jehovah's Witnesses here?' he asked. 'Why do you have to return to Rwanda?' Even some well-meaning

***Gaspard Rwakabubu with his  
daughter Deborah and wife, Melanie***





brothers tried to dissuade me. They said: 'You have four children. Read Luke 14:28-30, sit down, and think it over.' However, we did not waver.

"My boss paid all our air-travel costs back to Rwanda. When we got to Kigali, in May 1975, we rented a house made of mud bricks and with a mud floor, quite different from the well-equipped house we had when I worked for the mining company. Nevertheless, we had prepared ourselves and were determined to succeed."



***"This Good News of the Kingdom" in Kinyarwanda***

Since the special pioneers from other countries had used Swahili as a language of communication, many people thought that the pioneers had come to teach that language. Such thinking changed when Gaspard and his family arrived, for they were able to teach people Kingdom truth using the Kinyarwanda Bible.

Additionally, Brother Rwakabubu translated the 32-page booklet *"This Good News of the Kingdom"* into Kinyarwanda. It was published in 1976 and attracted much attention. People read it on buses and in the streets. The use of the name Jehovah led to many discussions.

### **RWANDANS EMBRACE THE TRUTH**

At that time, there were only about 11 publishers in the country, most of whom were not Rwandan citizens. Among the first Rwandans to learn the truth was Justin Rwagatore. He started studying in



**Justin Rwagatore**

the Swahili language with special pioneers from Tanzania, as they could not speak French or Kinyarwanda. Outgoing and friendly, he was baptized in 1976 and lived in Save, where the king of Rwanda had first permitted Catholic missionaries to establish a mission in 1900. Justin recalls that people were curious to know what the Bible really teaches. However, the clergy

were hostile toward Jehovah's Witnesses and forbade their flocks to listen to them or accept their literature.

Ferdinand Mugarura, a tenacious brother, was another one of the first Rwandans to accept the truth. In 1969, while living in eastern Congo, he acquired a copy of the book *The Truth That Leads to Eternal Life* in Swahili. Later, when he found out where the nearest Witnesses were, he and two companions

**Ferdinand Mugarura**



would leave home every Friday, walk 50 miles to attend the meetings and have a Bible study, and then walk home on Monday. Ferdinand was baptized in 1975, on the same day as one of his own Bible students. Appointed to serve as a special pioneer in Rwanda in 1977, he remembers that the previous year, a circuit assembly was held in the living room of the Rwakabubus'

house, and 34 were in attendance. Three were baptized.

### **MISSIONARIES DENIED ENTRY**

The Governing Body, ever alert to the needs of the worldwide field, had earlier assigned missionaries to Rwanda. In 1969, four graduates of the 47th class of the Watchtower Bible School of Gilead were invited to serve there.

Nicholas Fone recalls: "In late January, Brother Knorr handed out the class assignments. We heard him tell Paul and Marilyn Evans that they were assigned to Rwanda. He then said to my wife and me: 'And you are going with them!' We were very excited, and after the meeting we rushed to the Gilead library and got out a large atlas to find Rwanda. Later, though, we received a letter telling us that the brothers had been unable to obtain permission for us to enter Rwanda. We were disappointed but accepted a change of assignment with Paul and Marilyn to Congo."



***The three who were baptized  
in 1976: Leopold Harerimana,  
Pierre Twagirayezu, and  
Emmanuel Bazatsinda***

In 1976, two other couples were assigned to Rwanda after graduating from the 60th class of Gilead. Allowed to enter the country, the four missionaries moved into a rented house, preached courageously, and began to learn Kinyarwanda. When their visas expired after three months, the Immigration Department refused to renew them, so the missionaries were reassigned to Bukavu, eastern Congo.

### **“THEY WERE HARDWORKING”**

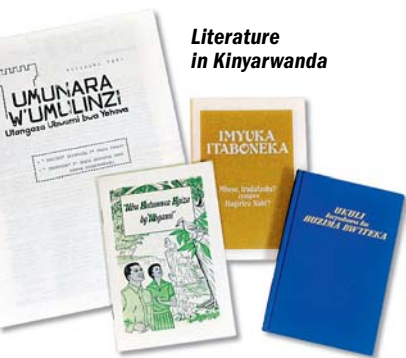
In the mid-1970’s, the special pioneers from Tanzania and Congo began to leave Rwanda for various reasons. Meanwhile,

Rwandan brothers began to pioneer and to expand the preaching activity to all parts of the country. Then, in 1978, the *Truth* book and two tracts were translated into Kinyarwanda. In addition, a monthly edition of *The Watchtower* appeared. Those publications helped further the Kingdom-preaching

work. Concerning those early days, missionary Manfred Tonak said of the Rwandan pioneers: “They were hardworking, and they devoted much time to the ministry. New ones followed their example.”

Gaspard Niyongira relates how the good news was spreading in those days. “By the time I got baptized in 1978, the clergy were becoming fearful at seeing so

#### **Literature in Kinyarwanda**



many coming into the truth. Hundreds attended our assemblies. When we went out preaching, we were like a swarm of locusts! Quite often, about 20 publishers would leave from the town center of Kigali and go preaching on foot from there to Kanombe, a distance of about six miles. After stopping for lunch, they would continue another four miles to Masaka before returning to Kigali by bus in the evening. Groups of publishers did similarly in other parts of the country. Not surprisingly, this intensive preaching gave people the impression that there were thousands of Jehovah's Witnesses. As a result, accusations were leveled against us, influencing the authorities to deny us legal recognition."

Full of enthusiasm for the truth, brothers in Rwanda wanted to taste the joy of associating with their brothers from other countries. Thus, in December 1978, some 37 from Rwanda, including children, journeyed through Uganda to Nairobi, Kenya—a distance of over 750 miles—to attend the "Victorious Faith" International Convention. The trip was difficult. Transportation was unreliable, and breakdowns were frequent. Furthermore, Uganda was politically unstable. When the delegates finally reached the Kenya border, Ugandan border officials accused them of being spies, arrested them, and took them to army headquarters in Kampala, Uganda. Idi Amin, then president of Uganda, personally interrogated them. Satisfied with their answers, he gave orders to release them. Though they missed the first day of the convention in Nairobi, those brothers rejoiced to see thousands of brothers from many nations peacefully united.

## **EFFORTS TO ACQUIRE LEGAL RECOGNITION**

The Bible truths and honorable moral standards taught by the Witnesses did not please everyone. The clergy in particular were dismayed to see that so many people responded. Brother Rwakabubu recollects: “Many who had been active Catholics, Protestants, and Adventists sent resignation letters to their former churches. Another brother said that the effect of the preaching work was like a fire set ablaze through the established religions. The number of those attending the meetings of the Kigali Congregation soon increased to more than 200. In the beginning, the clergy did not take much notice of our presence because we were so few. However, as the numbers increased, some charged that we constituted a danger to the country. It is noteworthy that about this time the archbishop of the Catholic Church in Rwanda, Vincent Nsengiyumva, became a member of the central committee of the ruling political party.

“Since we were growing rapidly, we needed legal status in order to bring in missionaries, build Kingdom Halls, and hold large assemblies. The Kenya branch arranged for Ernest Heuse, from Belgium, to contact government ministers to request legal recognition, but his efforts did not prove successful. Later, in 1982, the Kenya branch office advised us to prepare a letter addressed to the Minister of Justice and the Minister of the Interior, requesting legal recognition. I signed this request along with two other special pioneers. However, no reply was received.”

In the meantime, opposition increased. Antoine Rugwiza, a quiet, dignified brother, remembers that in a national radio broadcast, the president declared

that he would not tolerate those who denigrated the “Rwandan faith.” Everyone understood this to be a reference to Jehovah’s Witnesses. Not long after that address, the brothers were forbidden to meet together. Rumors abounded that soon there would also be arrests. Brother Rwakabubu was summoned twice to the State security agency for interrogation.

Then, in November 1982, Kiala Mwango, with his wife, Elaine, was sent from Nairobi to oversee circuit assemblies in Butare, Gisenyi, and Kigali. Brother Rwakabubu was the chairman at these assemblies. He had just completed the Kigali assembly when he was summoned for the third time to the presidency. However, this time he did not return! Within four days, the two other special pioneers who had signed the request for legal recognition were arrested. All three were imprisoned without trial or legal recourse. Other arrests followed. The Kingdom Hall was closed, and its doors barred. A letter from the Minister of Justice to the prefectures put Jehovah’s Witnesses under ban.

Finally, in October 1983, a trial was held for the three brothers who had signed the application for legal registration. The court accused them of swindling and deceiving people—totally unfounded charges. Not a single witness or document was presented as evidence during the trial. Nevertheless, the three brothers were sentenced to two years in prison. When convicted murderers were released under an amnesty program, these faithful brothers were not shown any favor. In Gisenyi, five other Witnesses endured almost two years of imprisonment without sentencing or a valid court order.

## LIFE IN PRISON

Life in prison was grim. Prison meals, served once a day, consisted of cassava and beans. Meat was on the menu only about once a month. The bedding had bed bugs, but because of overcrowding, many prisoners slept on the floor. Water for washing was scarce. The brothers shared quarters with condemned and violent criminals. Prison guards were often harsh, though one of them, Jean Fataki, was kind to the brothers. He accepted a Bible study, eventually became a baptized Witness, and has served as a faithful pioneer to this day.

### **He told his audience to beware of Jehovah's Witnesses**

Brother Rwakabubu recalls: "While we were in prison, the archbishop held Mass there. He told his audience to beware of Jehovah's Witnesses. Afterward, some of the Catholics present asked us why the archbishop had said this, as they could see that Jehovah's Witnesses were not dangerous."

Meanwhile, Roger and Noella Poels arrived in Kigali from Belgium. Roger had a work contract. The three brothers were still in prison, so Roger requested an audience with the Minister of Justice to explain our beliefs and ask politely what the government had against Jehovah's Witnesses. The minister cut the conversation short by saying: "Mr. Poels, I have heard enough from you! You will be put on the next plane to Brussels. You are expelled from the country!"

Since the three brothers remained firm and were not intimidated, they had to finish their two-year sentence, though for the second year they were transferred to a prison where the conditions were much better. They were released in November 1984.



## PERSECUTION INTENSIFIES

Opposition continued. A radio broadcast proclaimed that Jehovah's Witnesses were not good people and were extremists. By March 1986, arrests had become common throughout the country. Among those arrested was Augustin Murayi, who because of his Christian neutrality had been dismissed from his position as director general for the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education. He was attacked by the newspapers and even more so on the radio.

Other brothers and sisters, even pregnant sisters with small children, were arrested throughout the country. Toward the end of 1986, they were transferred to the central prison in Kigali to await trial. Because the brothers did not sing patriotic songs, did not wear the badge of the president, and did not buy the political party card, people wrongfully concluded that Jehovah's Witnesses opposed the government and were attempting to overthrow it.

Phocas Hakizumwami recalls with a cheerful smile: "Brothers from the congregation in Nyabisindu were some of the first to be arrested. Since the rest of us expected to be arrested sooner or later, we realized that our territory assignment was about to be changed from outside the prison to inside it. So we decided to carry out an extensive preaching campaign in our 'outside' territory first. We went to the market areas and placed many magazines and books.

***Phocas Hakizumwami***





***Palatin Nsanzurwimo with his wife (on the right) and children***

We prayed to Jehovah to help us cover our territory before we were imprisoned. Jehovah helped us, for we finished our territory on October 1, 1985. We were imprisoned seven days later.”

The following year, Palatin Nsanzurwimo and his wife, Fatuma, were arrested by the State security agents. After an interrogation of eight hours and an extensive search of their house, they were taken to prison along with their three children. On the way to prison, Palatin’s younger brother, following close behind, took charge of their five-year-old son and four-year-old daughter. Palatin and Fatuma were imprisoned together with their 14-month-old baby. Fatuma was later transferred to another prison and was not released for nine months.

At that time, Jean Tshiteya’s four children were expelled from school. A little later, on returning home, he found that his house had been ransacked and his wife arrested, leaving the children alone in the

house. Shortly thereafter, Brother Tshiteya himself was arrested and put in prison in Butare, joining his wife and other brothers. Thereafter, all the prisoners in Butare were transferred to the central prison in Kigali. In the meantime, Brother Tshiteya's children were cared for by brothers in Kigali.

Brother Tshiteya recalls: "As the brothers and sisters were brought in from prisons in other regions to the central prison in Kigali, they would greet one another with joy, saying 'Komera!' which means

'Take courage!' When one of the prison guards heard this greeting, he retorted: 'You people are mad! How can people take courage in prison?'"

In spite of those arrests, honesthearted people were not discouraged, and the persecution often brought positive results. Odette Mukandekezi, an energetic, outgoing sister, was among the many who were arrested at that time.

**Odette Mukandekezi**



She relates: "During the time of persecution, brothers were arrested and beaten. One day we passed a little girl named Josephine who was herding cattle. She had a Bible and had read in it that the early Christians were maligned, persecuted, scourged, and imprisoned. Since she knew that the Witnesses were being persecuted, she concluded that they must have the true religion, and she

**They greeted one another with the word "Komera!" which means "Take courage!"**



***Henry Ssenyonga on his motorbike***

requested a Bible study. She is now a baptized sister.”

During the ban, Gaspard Niyongira was working as a truck driver, and his work often took him to Nairobi, Kenya. He smuggled publications back to Rwanda in a special box fitted to his truck. The box could hold six cartons of literature. At that same time, Henry Ssenyonga, from western Uganda, regularly brought magazines across the border on his motorbike.

Congregation meetings had to be held in small groups. If the authorities suspected that Jehovah’s Witnesses were holding meetings, they would make a search. Brother Niyongira recalls: “I had an annex built onto my house, where we could hold meetings secretly. We buried our literature in plastic sacks in the ground and covered them with charcoal.”

As the wave of arrests started, Jean-Marie Mutezintare, who was newly baptized at the time, managed to attend the special international “Integrity Keepers” Convention in Nairobi in December 1985. On his return, he and Isaie Sibomana collected magazines from the brothers in western Uganda on their way to Rwanda. At the border, officials found the magazines, arrested and handcuffed the brothers, and led them off to interrogation and a cold night in a jail cell. Soon

the brothers found themselves in the central prison in Kigali. There they met about 140 imprisoned brothers and sisters, who were delighted to hear a firsthand report of the convention in Nairobi. Certainly, what they had to tell was encouraging, and it helped to fortify the brothers!

The imprisoned brothers held meetings and arranged for organized preaching activity. Apart from preaching, they also taught some prisoners to read and write. Further, they conducted Bible studies with interested people and helped prepare many new publishers for baptism. Some of them had been studying when they were arrested, and others had learned the truth in prison.

### **A CIRCUIT OVERSEER “VISITS” PRISON**

One of the brothers describes events in the Kigali prison in 1986: “Many brothers were there. We held a meeting to see how we could help the brothers on the outside. We decided to write them a letter to encourage them. We told them that when we finished our preaching territory in prison, we would come back home. We preached from bed to bed and conducted Bible studies. Later, when we heard that a circuit overseer was visiting the congregations outside, we too wanted a visit, so we made it a matter of prayer to Jehovah. Soon after that, Brother Rwakabubu, who was the circuit overseer, was imprisoned for the second time. As far as we were concerned, it was so that he could visit us.”

During the persecution, only one brother compromised. When he put on the political badge, the non-Witness prisoners beat, kicked, and insulted him, calling him a coward. His wife, who was studying the

Bible, asked him why he had not remained faithful. He later wrote a letter to the judges, telling them that he had made a mistake and was still one of Jehovah's Witnesses. He even wrote to the branch office in Kenya to apologize. He is now serving Jehovah faithfully once again.

### **PREACHING CONTINUES OUTSIDE**

Those who had not been arrested continued preaching with undiminished zeal, averaging about 20 hours a month. Alfred Semali, who was one of those still outside prison, recalls: "Although I was never imprisoned, I expected to be and prepared for it. The Kingdom Hall was closed, so we met in small groups and continued preaching. I would put my magazines in a khaki envelope, go into town as if I were looking for work, and then look for an opportunity to offer the magazines and discuss the Bible.

"In 1986 many of our brothers and interested ones were put in prison, even those who had just started to study the Bible. The brothers and even the new ones stood firm in an amazing way. Meanwhile, Witnesses in many countries wrote to the president of Rwanda to protest the unjust treatment, and the news on the radio reported that he had received hundreds of letters every day. This brought about good results, so that the following year our brothers and sisters and interested people were released by a presidential decree. We were filled with joy." As soon as they were released, the elders organized a baptism in Kigali, where 36 were baptized, and 34 of them enrolled immediately as auxiliary pioneers!

At the height of the persecution in 1986, there was an average of 435 publishers reporting; of these,

# “Jehovah Will Chase After Us!”

EMMANUEL NGIRENTE

**BORN** 1955    **BAPTIZED** 1982

**PROFILE** Member of the Rwanda Branch Committee and overseer of the Translation Department.



■ IN 1989, I was pioneering in eastern Rwanda. Then, at the end of that year, I was assigned to the translation office. Having no translation experience, I was shocked and did not feel that I was up to the challenge. However, I started working on three publications. We found a house to rent, and we got some dictionaries. Sometimes I worked right through the night, drinking coffee to keep awake.

When the invading army attacked in October 1990, certain people suspected Jehovah's Witnesses of involvement with the invading forces. The security agents began to check. Since I was working at home, it appeared to them that I was unemployed, so they wanted to know what I was doing. One day, they made a surprise search. I had been typing all night, and at five o'clock in the morning, I tried to sleep. Suddenly, the call came for me to leave home to participate in a community work.

While I was away, the local authorities ransacked my house. When I got back, my neighbors told me that a policeman and a local counselor had spent an hour reading through my translation manuscripts, which repeatedly referred to Jehovah. Eventually, they said: "Let's leave this house, or Jehovah will chase after us!"

about 140 brothers and sisters had been imprisoned. These Witnesses formed the backbone of Jehovah's organization in Rwanda. Their faith was of a "tested quality."—Jas. 1:3.

Finally, after the turbulent years of the 1980's, the congregations in Rwanda entered into a period of relative peace and growth. But what would the future bring? More embraced the truth. Would the new ones also prove to be disciples built with fire-resistant materials? (1 Cor. 3:10-15) Would their faith be able to withstand the trials that lay ahead? Only time would tell.

### **WAR AND POLITICAL UNREST**

By 1990, there were nearly 1,000 active publishers in Rwanda. However, the political scene was becoming unstable, and in October, forces of the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF) invaded the northern part of Rwanda from neighboring Uganda.

Ferdinand Mugarura, a courageous brother who had been imprisoned for his faith on two different occasions, was living in Ruhengeri when this invasion started. He recalls: "Hatred and tribalism were spreading. Yet, Jehovah's Witnesses maintained their neutral stand, not getting involved in the political factions or ethnic prejudices. Because the brothers refused to violate their neutrality, some had to flee their homes and some lost their jobs."

One sister, a schoolteacher and widow with three children, refused to make contributions to the army. For this, the head teacher reported her to the military authorities, and she was thrown in prison for a second time, having already been imprisoned during the 1980's. When the invading forces reached the town



where she was imprisoned, the prison was broken into and all the prisoners escaped. However, instead of fleeing with the other prisoners, the sister remained in the prison. When the invading forces withdrew, she was rearrested and transferred to the central prison in Kigali. There she prayed that she might know the date of the Memorial, since she did not want to miss it. To her great surprise, she was later released on the very day of the Memorial! Because of her neutral stand, she lost her house and her teaching job, but she became a zealous pioneer instead.

With international intervention, the invasion from Uganda was temporarily halted. In 1991, moves were initiated to install multiparty politics in the country. Several major parties and a number of smaller parties were formed, which created a spirit of regionalism and tribalism. Some parties had moderate objectives, but others were militant and extremist. For the first time, the neutral stand of Jehovah's Witnesses was seen favorably. Because they did not take sides with the political and tribal factions, the Witnesses were no longer viewed as enemies by the government and by the people in general.

In September 1991, an international delegation of brothers accompanied by two brothers from Rwanda—Gaspard Rwakabubu and Tharcisse Seminega—visited prominent government ministers in Kigali. The brothers spoke with the new Minister of Justice, who listened to them sympathetically. The brothers thanked him for the positive steps already taken and encouraged him to go further by giving us full religious freedom.

In January 1992, before legal recognition had been granted, the brothers held a district convention in

Kigali. Godfrey and Jennie Bint reminisce: “We were serving in Uganda at the time and were surprised to get a letter from the branch office in Kenya, asking us to go to Rwanda for three weeks to help with convention arrangements and with the recording of the drama. The brothers were overwhelmingly hospitable, and we were invited to eat with a different family each day. A private soccer stadium had been rented, and preparation was well under way when we arrived. By then, the brothers had already planned the drama recording, and it went smoothly, despite the limited equipment available. Although many brothers from the north of the country could not get papers to travel and the borders with Burundi and Uganda were closed, there were 2,079 in attendance on Sunday, and 75 were baptized.”

## LEGAL RECOGNITION AT LAST!

A few months later, on April 13, 1992, the work of Jehovah's Witnesses was legally registered in Rwanda at last—and for the first time! The long struggle to proclaim the good news in the face of bans, harassment, and imprisonment was over. The brothers could look forward to a new era of theological growth and expansion.

The Governing Body lost no time in assigning missionaries to the country. Henk van Bussel, previously serving in the Central Afri-

**Certificate of registration,  
April 13, 1992**



can Republic and Chad, and Godfrey and Jennie Bint, formerly serving in Zaire (now Democratic Republic of the Congo) and Uganda, were the first missionaries to get residence visas. A Country Committee was appointed to oversee the preaching activity.

Brother Bint relates what happened when they first arrived with Henk van Bussel: "We soon found a suitable house for a missionary home very close to the Kingdom Hall. We immediately plunged into learning the Kinyarwanda language and found it to be quite a challenge, as it had been for the first special pioneers back in 1970. One of the textbooks gave this advice: 'The letters CW together are pronounced *TCHKW*!' We also remember that the sister teaching us said, 'You will never properly pronounce the "shy" in "isi nshya" [the new earth], unless you smile!'"

Later that year, a new peak of 1,665 publishers was reached, and in January 1993, another district convention was held in Kigali. This time the attendance was 4,498, with 182 baptized. Kiala Mwangi came as a representative from the Kenya branch. No one could have suspected at that time that on a plot of land just across the road from the stadium where we held the convention, a branch office would be built in 2006.

Despite another invasion from the north, the preaching activity did not slow down. By 1993 the invading army reached within a few miles of Kigali. The borders with Uganda remained closed, and heavy artillery fire could be heard just over the hills from the capital. About one million people had fled from the north of the country. This included 381 brothers and

sisters, who were taken care of by the brothers in and around Kigali. However, in Arusha, Tanzania, a cease-fire was negotiated, a buffer zone was established, and the government agreed to share power with the invading forces and a number of larger and smaller political parties.

### **A VERY SPECIAL ASSEMBLY DAY!**

A special assembly day was scheduled to be held that year in the Kigali Regional Stadium. However, the stadium authorities had made a double booking—a soccer match was scheduled for 3:00 p.m. The brothers attended the morning session, but before the afternoon session could start, the soccer fans began to arrive—and the police could not stop them from entering. The stadium manager said that the match would not be over until 6:00 p.m. So the brothers left and returned at 6:00 p.m. to hear the rest of the program.



***Brothers removing the platform  
so that the soccer match  
could take place***

This caused some anxiety because a curfew was in force. Vehicles were not allowed to travel after 6:00 p.m., and people could not be outside after 9:00 p.m. However, at about 7:00 p.m., a radio announcement said that the curfew had been postponed to 11:00 p.m. In addition, there was no certain electricity supply for lighting. Since the terms of the rental of the stadium had not been respected, the mayor of Kigali arranged for lighting to be supplied. He even arranged for free transportation, which was made available to the brothers after the program. Thus the brothers were able to hold the entire assembly program. Imagine their surprise when they came out of the stadium and found a large number of buses waiting for them!

Günter Reschke remembers that he visited Rwanda at the end of September 1993. He recalls: "I was sent by the Kenya branch to Kigali to teach the Kingdom Ministry School with Brother Rwakabubu. There were only 63 elders in Rwanda at that time, although the number of publishers had increased to 1,881. There was already much tension in the country, and we heard rumors of fighting in the north. Of course, no one expected the terrible times that lay ahead, but the school certainly provided food at the right time. It fortified the elders in their faith, equipping them as shepherds, which was much needed as the dark clouds of war approached."

### **PLANS TO ESTABLISH AN OFFICE**

At the end of March 1994, Leonard Ellis and his wife, Nancy, came from Nairobi to attend special assembly days and to help the translation office. The branch in Nairobi had recommended that the

missionary home and the translation office in Rwanda be merged. On Monday, April 4, the *Watchtower* Study was attended by an enlarged translation team, the Country Committee, the missionaries, and Brother and Sister Ellis. It was an exciting time—the start of more expansion.

Having completed their work, Brother and Sister Ellis left on what would prove to be the last passenger flight out of Kigali for many months. The following afternoon, Brother Rwakabubu phoned the missionary home to say that the Russian embassy had relinquished its claim to a plot of land on which we had been hoping to build a country office. It could now be allotted to Jehovah's Witnesses, and we were to have a meeting about it the next morning, Thursday, April 7. That appointment could not be kept.

***Leonard and Nancy Ellis (center)  
with the Rwakabubu and Sombe families***



## **GENOCIDE BEGINS!**

On Wednesday evening, April 6, a plane was shot down, and it burst into flames near Kigali. On board were the presidents of Rwanda and Burundi. All lives were lost. Few people were aware of the crash that evening; the official radio station made no announcement.

The three missionaries—the Bints and Henk—will never forget the days that followed. Brother Bint explains: “In the early morning of April 7, we awoke to the sounds of gunfire and explosions of hand grenades. This was not unusual because in recent months the political situation in the country had become extremely unstable. However, while we were preparing breakfast, we received a telephone call. Emmanuel Ngirente, who was at the translation office, told us that the local radio station had announced the death of the two presidents in the plane crash. The



# Within 100 Days, a Million Died

“The 1994 genocide in Rwanda represents one of the clearest cases of genocide in modern history. From early April 1994 through mid-July 1994, members of the small Central African state’s majority Hutu ethnic group systematically slaughtered members of the Tutsi ethnic minority. An extremist Hutu regime, fearing the loss of its power in the face of a democracy movement and a civil war, made plans for the elimination of all those—moderate Hutu as well as Tutsi—it perceived as threats to its authority. The genocide ended only when a mostly Tutsi rebel army occupied the country and drove the genocidal regime into exile. Over a period of only one hundred days, as many as one million people lost their lives in the genocide and war—making the Rwandan slaughter one of the most intense waves of killing in recorded history.”—*Encyclopedia of Genocide and Crimes Against Humanity*.

About 400 of Jehovah’s Witnesses were murdered in the genocide, including Hutu who were killed for protecting their Tutsi brothers and sisters. No Witnesses died at the hands of fellow believers.

***Refugees fleeing Rwanda***





Ministry of Defense warned everyone in Kigali not to leave their homes.

“About nine o’clock in the morning, we heard looters smash into our neighbors’ home. They stole the family’s car and killed the mother of the family.

“Soon soldiers and looters came to our home, banged on our metal gate, and rang our bell. We kept quiet and did not go outside to answer. For some reason, they did not attempt to force the gate but moved on to other houses. The sound of automatic weapons firing and of explosions continued all around; there was no possibility of trying to leave. Gunfire was loud and near, so we went to the corridor between the rooms in the center of the house, where we would be protected from stray bullets. We realized that the situation was not going to end quickly, so we decided to ration our food supplies by preparing one meal a day, which we could share together. The next day, when we had just eaten lunch and were listening to the international news on the radio, Henk cried out, ‘They are coming over our fence!’

“There was little time to think. We went into the bathroom and locked the door. We then prayed together, asking Jehovah to help us endure whatever might happen. Before we had finished praying, we heard the militia and the looters smashing their way through the windows and doors. Within minutes, they were in the house, yelling and overturning furniture. There were about 40 looters—men, women, and children—along with the militia. We also heard shooting as people squabbled over articles they had found.

“After what seemed to be an eternity—but was only about 40 minutes—they tried the bathroom door.

Then, because it was locked, they started to break it open. We now realized that we had to go out and show ourselves. The men were crazed and drugged. They threatened us with machetes and knives. Jennie was crying out loud to Jehovah. One man swung his machete, striking Henk with the flat side of the blade at the base of his neck. Henk fell into the bathtub. Somehow, I managed to find money and give it to the attackers. They fought over it.

“Suddenly, we became aware of a young man staring at us. Although we did not know him, he recognized us, maybe from the preaching work. He grabbed hold of us, pushed us back into the bathroom, and told us to shut the door. He said that he would save us.

“The sounds of looting continued for another 30 minutes or so, and finally it became quiet. Eventually, the young man returned to tell us that we could come out. Insisting that we leave immediately, he led us out of the house. We did not stop to pick up anything. With horror, we saw the bodies of some of our neighbors who had been murdered. Two members of the Presidential Guard escorted us to a military officer’s house nearby. The officer then escorted us to the Mille Collines Hotel, where many people had taken refuge. Finally, on April 11, we were evacuated to Kenya, after many more anxious hours and a stressful military operation that transported us on a roundabout route from the town to the back of the airport. We arrived at the reception area of Nairobi Bethel, uncombed and disheveled. Henk, who had been separated from us during the evacuation, arrived some hours later. The Bethel family overwhelmed us with loving care and support.”

## “Death Chambers”

“Organizers of the genocide exploited the historic concept of sanctuary to lure tens of thousands of Tutsi into church buildings with false promises of protection; then Hutu militia and soldiers systematically slaughtered the unfortunate people who had sought refuge, firing guns and tossing grenades into the crowds gathered in church sanctuaries and school buildings, and methodically finishing off survivors with machetes, pruning hooks, and knives. . . . The involvement of the churches, however, went far beyond the passive use of church buildings as death chambers. In some communities, clergy, catechists, and other church employees used their knowledge of the local population to identify Tutsi for elimination. In other cases, church personnel actively participated in the killing.”—*Christianity and Genocide in Rwanda*.

“The main allegation concerning the [Catholic] Church is that it switched its allegiance from the Tutsi elite to the creation of a Hutu-led revolution, thereby assisting in Habyarimana’s subsequent rise to power in a majority Hutu state. In terms of the actual genocide, critics once again hold the Church directly responsible for inciting hatred, sheltering perpetrators, and failing to protect those who sought refuge within its walls. There are also those who believe that, as the spiritual leader of the majority population

in Rwanda, the Church is morally responsible for failing to take all available measures to end the killing.”—*Encyclopedia of Genocide and Crimes Against Humanity*.



## **SAVED BY A LITTLE GIRL'S PRAYER**

On the day after the plane crash that killed the presidents of Rwanda and Burundi, six government soldiers went to Brother Rwakabubu's house. Their eyes were bloodshot, their breath reeked of alcohol, and their manner indicated that they were drugged. They demanded weapons. Brother Rwakabubu told them that he and his family were Jehovah's Witnesses and that they had no weapons.

The soldiers knew that Jehovah's Witnesses, as neutrals, had refused to support the government and did not make contributions to the army. This enraged the soldiers. Gaspard and Melanie Rwakabubu are not Tutsi, but the Hutu Interahamwe militia were killing not only Tutsi but also moderate Hutu, especially if they were suspected of sympathizing with the Tutsi or the invading army.

The soldiers hit Gaspard and Melanie with sticks and took them, along with their five children, into the bedroom. They stripped the sheets off the bed and started to cover the family with the sheets. Some had grenades in their hands, so their intentions were clear. Gaspard asked, "May we please pray?"

One soldier contemptuously refused their request. Then, after some discussion, the soldiers reluctantly agreed to let them pray. "OK," they said, "you can pray for two minutes."

They prayed silently, but Deborah Rwakabubu, who was six years old, prayed out loud: "Jehovah, they want to kill us, but how will we be able to make return visits on the people I preached to with Papa, where I placed five magazines? They are waiting for us to call back, and they need to know the truth. I



***“We lacked brotherhood,” a sign on a Catholic church in Kibuye (now Karongi)***

promise you that if we are spared, I will become a publisher, get baptized, and be a pioneer! Jehovah, save us!”

At hearing this, the soldiers expressed amazement. Finally, one of them said: “Because of this little girl’s prayer, we will not kill you. If others come here, you tell them that we have already been here.”\*

### **THE SITUATION WORSENS**

Gradually the war intensified as the invading army (the Rwandan Patriotic Front) made further advances on the capital, Kigali. This spurred the desperate Interahamwe militiamen to carry out more killings.

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\* Deborah did become a publisher, got baptized at the age of ten, and now serves with her mother as a regular pioneer.

Roadblocks manned by soldiers and armed Interahamwe militiamen along with local residents were set up throughout the town and at all road junctions. All able-bodied men were forced to man the roadblocks with the Interahamwe, night and day. The purpose of the roadblocks was to identify and murder Tutsi.

As the killing continued throughout the country, hundreds of thousands of Rwanda's inhabitants left their homes. Many of them, including Jehovah's Witnesses, sought refuge in nearby Congo and Tanzania.

### **FACING WAR AND DEATH**

The following are accounts of our brothers and sisters as their world fell to pieces around them. Remember that Jehovah's Witnesses in Rwanda had undergone fiery tests in the 1980's, tests that had strengthened and refined their faith and courage. Their faith enabled them to remain "no part of the world" by refusing to participate in elections, local defense, and political affairs. (John 15:19) Their courage helped them to face the consequences of that refusal—scorn, imprisonment, persecution, and death. Those tested qualities, along with their love of God and neighbor, enabled Jehovah's Witnesses not only to have no part in the genocide but also to risk their lives to protect one another.

There are many experiences that have not been included. Most brothers would prefer to forget the horrible details, since they do not seek vengeance. It is our hope that the story of their faith can inspire all of us to show more fully the love that identifies true disciples of Jesus Christ.—John 13:34, 35.

# “How Can We Kill Someone That Everyone Is Pleading For?”

JEAN-MARIE MUTEZINTARE

**BORN** 1959    **BAPTIZED** 1985


**PROFILE** A builder by trade and a faithful brother with a cheerful smile, who was imprisoned for eight months in 1986, not long after his baptism.

Married to Jeanne in 1993, Jean-Marie is now chairman of the Kigali Assembly Hall Committee.



■ ON April 7, my wife, Jeanne, and I, as well as our month-old baby girl, Jemima, were awakened violently by the sound of gunfire. At first, we thought it was just a political problem, but we soon learned that the Interahamwe militia had begun systematically to kill all Tutsi. Because we are Tutsi, we dared not venture outside. We prayed fervently to Jehovah to help us know what to do. Meanwhile, three courageous Hutu brothers—Athanase, Charles, and Emmanuel—risked their lives to bring us food.

For about a month, my wife and I were forced to hide in different brothers' homes. At the time that the hunting for Tutsi was reaching a climax, the militia came with knives, spears, and machetes to where I was hiding. I saw them coming and ran as fast as I could to hide in some bushes, but they found me. Surrounded by a group of armed men, I pleadingly told them that I was one of Jehovah's Witnesses, but they said, "You are a rebel!" They kicked me to the




ground and hit me with clubs and rifle butts. By now a crowd had gathered. In the crowd, there was a man whom I had preached to. He courageously cried out, "Have mercy on him!" Then, one of the Hutu brothers, Charles, came on the scene. Seeing me lying there covered with blood, Charles' wife and children started crying. The killers, unnerved, let me go, saying, "How can we kill someone that everyone is pleading for?" Charles took me back to his house to take care of my wounds. The militia warned us that if I escaped, they would kill Charles in place of me.

In the meantime, I had been separated from Jeanne and our baby. In a terrifying attack, she too had been beaten and had narrowly escaped being killed. Later, people reported to her that I had been killed. They even asked her to find some sheets and come to wrap up my body.

At Athanase's house, Jeanne and I shed tears of relief when we were reunited. Nevertheless, we expected to die the next day. It was another day of terror, a nightmare, hiding in one place after another. I remember pleading with Jehovah for help: "Yesterday you helped us. Please help us again. We want to bring up our baby and to continue serving you!" Toward evening, at terrible risk, three Hutu brothers managed to lead us in a group of nearly 30 Tutsi through the dangerous roadblocks to safety. Of that group, six accepted the truth.

We learned later that Charles and his group continued to help others but that the Interahamwe militia had been furious to discover that the brothers had helped dozens of Tutsi to escape. Eventually, they caught Charles and a Hutu publisher named Leonard. Charles' wife heard them say, "You must die because you helped the Tutsi to escape." Then they murdered both of them. This brings Jesus' words to mind: "No one has love greater than this,





that someone should surrender his soul in behalf of his friends.”—John 15:13.

Before the war, when Jeanne and I were planning to get married, we decided that one of us should become a pioneer. However, after the war, because many of our relatives had been killed, we took in six orphans, although we then had two children of our own. Nevertheless, Jeanne was able to start pioneering after the war and has done so for 12 years. Also, of our six orphans—whose parents were not Jehovah’s Witnesses—all are now baptized. The three boys have become ministerial servants, and one of the girls is serving with her husband at Bethel. We now have four children of our own, and our two oldest daughters are baptized.

***Brother and Sister Mutezintare with two of their children and five of the orphans***



## **“We Kept Our Balance Because of the Truth”**

Valerie Musabyimana and Angeline Musabwe are fleshly sisters. They came from a strong Catholic background, and their father was chairman of one of the parish committees. Valerie studied for four years to become a nun. However, because of disappointment over the conduct of a priest, she left her studies in 1974. She later



studied the Bible with Jehovah's Witnesses, got baptized, and started pioneering in 1979. Angeline, her sister, also studied the Bible and got baptized. Serving together as special pioneers, the two sisters have helped many to learn the truth.

Angeline and Valerie were living in Kigali at the time of the genocide and hid nine people in their house, including two pregnant women, one whose husband had just been killed. After some time, that woman gave birth. Since it was too dangerous to leave the house, the sisters helped deliver the baby. When the neighbors learned of this, they brought them food and water.

When the Interahamwe learned that Angeline and Valerie were hiding Tutsi, they came and said: "We have come to kill the Jehovah's Witness Tutsi." However, since the house that the sisters were renting belonged to an army officer, the killers were afraid to enter.\* Everyone in the house survived.

Finally, when the war intensified and there was a continuous rain of bullets, Angeline and Valerie had to evacuate the area. They fled with other Witnesses to Goma, where the Congolese brothers gave them a warm welcome. They continued to preach there and conducted many Bible studies.

How did they cope with their feelings after the genocide? Valerie said sadly: "I lost many of my spiritual children, including Eugène Ntabana and his family. We kept our balance because of the truth. We know that Jehovah will judge evildoers."

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\* After the war, the owner started to study the Bible. He died, but his wife became a Witness, as did their two children.



## They Were Ready to Die for Us

ALFRED SEMALI

**BORN** 1964    **BAPTIZED** 1981

**PROFILE** Lived in the suburbs of Kigali with his wife, Georgette. Alfred, a loving father and husband, is now a member of the Hospital Liaison Committee in Kigali.

■ **AFTER** the genocide began, Athanase, a Hutu brother who lived near us, sent word to warn us, "They are killing all the Tutsi and will kill you also." He insisted that we come to his house. Before the war, he had dug an underground chamber about 12 feet deep, and he offered to hide us there. I was the first to descend the ladder he had made. Athanase arranged to have food and mattresses sent down for us. Meanwhile the killings continued all around.

Although the neighbors suspected that we were hiding there and threatened to burn his house down, Athanase and his family continued to hide us. Clearly, they were ready to die for us.

After three more days, there was fierce fighting in the area, so Athanase's family joined us in the hole, bringing the number of us down there to 16. We were in pitch darkness because we did not dare use any kind of light. Each day, we rationed out one spoonful of uncooked rice soaked in water with sugar per person. After ten days, even that food ran out. By the 13th day, we were so hungry! What could we do? From the top of the ladder, it was just barely

possible to see what was happening outside, and we noticed that the situation had changed. We could see soldiers wearing a different uniform. Since Athanase's family had protected me, I felt it was my turn to make a sacrifice. I decided to go up with a teenage son of Athanase and look for food. We all prayed first.

After about 30 minutes, we returned with the news that the Rawandan Patriotic Front was now in control of the area. Some soldiers came with us. I showed them where we had been hiding. They did not believe it until all the brothers and sisters started coming out of the hole, one by one. Georgette says she will never forget that moment: "We came out dirty; we had been underground nearly three weeks without being able to wash ourselves or our clothes."

The soldiers were astonished that people from both ethnic groups had stayed together in that hole. "We are Jehovah's Witnesses," I explained, "and we do not have any racial discrimination." They were amazed and said, "Give food and sugar to these people from the hole!" Then they took us to a house where about 100 people were being temporarily housed. After that, a sister insisted that all 16 of us stay with her family.

We are thankful that we survived. However, my brother and my sister and their families—all Jehovah's Witnesses—were murdered, as were many others around us. We feel the loss, but we also know that "time and unforeseen occurrence befall [us] all." Georgette describes our feelings this way: "We lost many brothers and sisters, and others came through harrowing experiences of fleeing and hiding. However, we strengthened our relationship with Jehovah through prayer, and we saw that Jehovah's hand is powerful. He comforted us by bringing us help at the right time through his organization, and we are very thankful. Jehovah abundantly blessed us."—Eccl. 9:11.





## Jehovah Helped Us Through Those Dreadful Times

ALBERT BAHATI

**BORN** 1958    **BAPTIZED** 1980

**PROFILE** Elder, married, with three children. His wife and oldest daughter are regular pioneers. His son is a ministerial servant. When Albert, a quiet brother who is Hutu,

started attending meetings in 1977, there were only about 70 publishers in the country. In 1988 he was put in prison and beaten. When he refused to wear the political party badge, a neighbor who used to be a soldier stuck the pin of a badge into his skin and sneered: “Now you are wearing the badge!”

■ **AFTER** the death of the presidents, some brothers, relatives, and neighbors fled to my home. I grew anxious, though, about two Tutsi sisters, Goretti and Suzanne, who were not with us. Although it was extremely dangerous, I went looking for them. People were fleeing, and I spotted Goretti and her children and took them to my house, knowing that there was a roadblock where they were heading, and they would surely have been killed.

Some days later, Suzanne, along with five others, managed to join us. Now, with these newcomers, there were more than 20 of us in the house, all in great danger.

On at least three occasions, the Interahamwe came to the house. Once they saw my wife, Vestine, through the window and called to her to come out. She is Tutsi. I stood between the killers and my wife and told them: “If you kill

her, you must kill me first!" After some discussion, they told her to go back into the house. One of them said, "I do not want to kill a woman; I want to kill a man." They then fixed their attention on my wife's brother. As they led him outside, I threw myself between them and the young man and pleaded, "For the love of God, leave him!"

"I don't work for God," one of them retorted, jabbing me with his elbow. He relented, though, saying to me: "Go then! Take him!" So my brother-in-law was spared.

About a month later, two brothers came looking for food. Since I had a supply of beans, I gave them some, but as I accompanied them to show them a safe path to take, I heard a gunshot and lost consciousness. I had been hit in the eye by shrapnel from a stray shot. A neighbor helped me get to the hospital, but I lost the sight in my injured eye. Worse still, I could not get back home. Meanwhile, as the fighting intensified, it became too dangerous for any who were in my house to stay there, so they fled to the houses of other brothers, who put their lives in danger to protect them all until June 1994. I was not able to rejoin my wife and family until October. I thank Jehovah for helping me and my family through all those dreadful times.

***Albert Bahati with his family and others he hid***





## “This Is the Way”

G A S P A R D N I Y O N G I R A

**BORN** 1954   **BAPTIZED** 1978


**PROFILE** A fearless fighter for the truth, with a ready smile and a positive attitude. Now married, with three daughters, Gaspard is a member of the Rwanda Branch Committee.

■ **AFTER** the shooting started in the early morning of April 7, I saw that about 15 houses belonging to Tutsi were burning. They included two of our brothers' houses. Would our house be next? I nearly went out of my mind for fear of what could happen to my wife, who is a Tutsi, and my two children.

It was not clear to me what we should do. There was confusion and panic, along with rumors and false reports. I thought it would be safer for my wife and children to go to a brother's house nearby, and I would join them later. When it was safe for me to go there, I found that she had been forced to flee to a large school complex. That afternoon, a neighbor came to me and said, “All the Tutsi seeking refuge at the school will be massacred!” I immediately ran to the school, found my wife and children, and rounded up about 20 others—including brothers and sisters—telling them to return to their homes. As we were leaving, we saw the militia leading people out of town to a place where they murdered more than 2,000 Tutsi.

In the meantime, the wife of another neighbor had given birth at the school complex. When the Interahamwe





threw a grenade into the school, the husband fled with the newborn baby. In the panic, the mother fled in another direction. Despite being a Tutsi, the father managed to get through the roadblocks because of the baby in his arms, and he ran to our house. He asked me to try to get milk for the baby. When I dared to venture out, I unwittingly came to a roadblock manned by militia. Taking me to be a Tutsi sympathizer because I was going to get milk for a Tutsi's baby, they said, "Let us kill him!" A soldier hit me with his rifle butt, and I lost consciousness, bleeding from the nose and face. Believing me to be dead, they dragged me behind a nearby house.

A neighbor recognized me and said, "You must leave, or they will come back and finish you off." He helped me get back home.

Painful though it was, this incident proved to be a protection for me. Because I was known to be a driver, five men came the next day to compel me to be the driver for a military chief. Seeing my injuries, they did not insist, neither did they try to force me to do patrol duty with the Interahamwe.

Then followed days of fear, uncertainty, and hunger. During that time, a Tutsi woman ran into my house with her two small children. We hid her in a cupboard in the kitchen and put the two children with mine in another room. When the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF), the invading army, made further advances and it was rumored that the Interahamwe had started a mop-up operation to kill all Hutu who had Tutsi wives, our whole family got ready to flee again. But the RPF had already taken the area, so the Tutsi were out of danger. Now, however, I was in danger of being killed.

I then went with a group of our neighbors to the road-block that was now manned by the RPF soldiers. When they saw me, a Hutu, with my head bandaged, they thought I must be one of the militia. They called out to the neighbors and to me: "Among you, there are killers and looters, yet you are asking for help! Who of you have hidden or protected Tutsi?" I showed them the woman and the children whom I had been hiding. Taking the children to one side, they asked them, "Who is this man with the bandaged head?" They replied, "He is not with the Interahamwe; he is one of Jehovah's Witnesses and is a good man." I had saved the Tutsi woman and her two children, and now they were saving me!

Satisfied with those answers, the soldiers took us to a camp some 12 miles from Kigali, where about 16,000 survivors had gathered. There we met up with about 60 brothers and sisters from 14 different congregations. We organized meetings; 96 attended the first one! It was a very hard time, however, as we received reports of friends who had been killed and sisters who had been raped. I was the only elder, and many brothers and sisters needed comfort and help from the Scriptures. I listened to their heartrending stories and reassured them that Jehovah loved them and understood their pain.

Finally, on July 10, after many weeks of terror, we were able to return to our homes. I remember that during the fear and danger, I often found myself thinking of the song entitled "This Is the Way." The words of that song encouraged me greatly: "No right or left turning we dare ever take, but walking in God's way advancement we'll make."

## THE STORY OF JEAN AND CHANTAL

Jean de Dieu (John) Mugabo, a cheerful, caring brother, started studying with Jehovah's Witnesses in 1982. Before his baptism in 1984, he had already been imprisoned three times for his stand as one of Jehovah's Witnesses. His wife, Chantal, was also



baptized in 1984, and they were married in 1987. When the genocide started, they had three children, all girls. The two older children were staying with their grandparents out of town, and only the baby of six months was with John and Chantal.

The first day of the genocide, April 7, 1994, soldiers and the Interahamwe started attacking the homes of all Tutsi. John was arrested and beaten with clubs; but he managed to escape, and joined by another brother, he ran to the nearby Kingdom Hall. Meanwhile, unaware of what had happened to her husband, Chantal tried frantically to get out of town with the baby in order to rejoin their other two children.

John relates what happened to him: "The Kingdom Hall had previously been a bakery and still had a large chimney. For one week the brother and I hid in the Kingdom Hall itself, and a Hutu sister brought us food when it was safe to do so. Later, we had to hide in the roof, between the iron roofing sheets and the ceiling, where the sun absolutely roasted us during the

day. Desperate to find a better hiding place, we managed to remove some bricks from the chimney stack and get into the chimney, where we continued to hide in a crouching position for more than a month.

“Nearby, there was a roadblock, and the Interahamwe militiamen often entered the Kingdom Hall to talk or to take shelter when it rained. We could hear them talking below. The sister continued to bring us food whenever possible. At times, I thought I would not be able to bear it any longer, but we kept praying for endurance. Finally, on May 16, the sister came to inform us that the Rwandan Patriotic Front had tak-

***Left to right: (back) André Twahirwa, Jean de Dieu, Immaculée, Chantal (with baby), Suzanne; (front) Mugabo children: Jean-Luc and Agapé***



en control of the side of town we were on and that we could come out of hiding.”

In the meantime, what had happened to John’s wife, Chantal? She takes up the story: “I managed to escape from the house with our baby on April 8. I found two sisters, Immaculée, whose identity card indicated that she was a Hutu, and Suzanne, a Tutsi. We intended to reach Bugesera, a town about 30 miles away, where my other two children were staying with my parents. However, we heard that there were roadblocks barring all the roads out of town, so we decided to head for a nearby village just on the outskirts of Kigali, where Immaculée had a relative named Gahizi, who was also one of Jehovah’s Witnesses. Gahizi, a Hutu, welcomed us, and despite threats from the neighbors, he did everything he could to help us. When the government soldiers and the Interahamwe learned that Gahizi had protected Tutsi, they shot him.

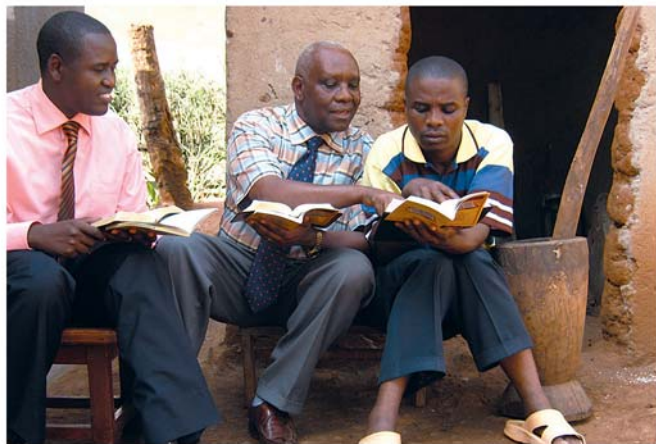
“After murdering Gahizi, the soldiers took us down to the river to kill us. Terrified, we waited for the end. Suddenly, there arose a heated dispute among the soldiers, and one of them said: ‘Do not kill the women. It will bring us bad luck. This is the time to kill only the men.’ Then, one of the brothers who had been following us, André Twahirwa, who had just been baptized the previous week, managed to take us to his place despite protests from neighbors. The next day, he accompanied us back to Kigali, where he hoped to find a safe place for us. He helped us get past several extremely dangerous roadblocks. Immaculée was carrying my baby so that if we were stopped, the baby might be

spared. Suzanne and I had torn up our identity cards in an attempt to conceal our identities.

“At one of the roadblocks, the Interahamwe hit Immaculée and said, ‘Why are you traveling with these Tutsi?’ They would not let Suzanne and me pass. So Immaculée and André went ahead to Brother Rwakabubu’s house. At great risk, André and two other brothers, Simon and Mathias, helped us past the last roadblock and took me to Brother Rwakabubu’s house, while Suzanne went to the house of one of her relatives.

“However, it was now too dangerous for me to stay at Brother Rwakabubu’s house, so with great difficulty, the brothers managed to get me to the Kingdom Hall, where other Witnesses were being hidden. By then, ten Tutsi brothers and sisters and others who had fled were already there. Immaculée was so faith-

***Védaste Bimenyimana conducting a Bible study***



ful that she refused to leave me. She said, ‘If they kill you and I survive, I will save your baby.’”\*

Meanwhile, a brother living nearby, Védaste Bimenyimana, who had a Tutsi wife, had just managed to get his family to a safe place. After this, he came back to help those remaining in the Kingdom Hall to find a place of safety. Thankfully, they all survived.

After the genocide, John and Chantal eventually learned that their parents and John and Chantal’s two-year-old and five-year-old daughters, who had been staying with their grandparents, had been murdered, in addition to about 100 of their relatives. How did they feel about such devastating losses? “In the beginning, it was unbearable,” admits Chantal. “We felt a kind of numbness. The loss of life had gone far beyond what anyone ever imagined. We could only leave it in Jehovah’s hands, with the hope of seeing our children again in the resurrection.”

### **HIDDEN FOR 75 DAYS!**

Tharcisse Seminega was baptized in Congo in 1983. At the time of the genocide, he was living in Butare, Rwanda, some 75 miles from Kigali. “After the presidential plane crashed in Kigali, we heard that there was a decree to kill all the

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\* That baby is now a baptized sister.

***Tharcisse Seminega  
and his wife, Chantal***







***Tharcisse and Justin next to the hut where  
Tharcisse and his family were hidden for a month***

Tutsi,” he said. “Two brothers tried to plan our escape through Burundi, but all the roads and paths were guarded by Interahamwe militia.

**“Jehovah, we  
are unable to  
do anything to  
save our lives.  
Only you can!”**

“We were prisoners in our own house, and we did not know where to go. Four soldiers were watching our house, and one had set up a machine gun about 200 yards away. In a fervent prayer to Jehovah, I cried out: ‘Jehovah, we are unable to do anything to save our lives. Only you can!’ Toward evening, a brother ran to our house, fearing that we were already dead. The military permitted him to enter the house and stay for some minutes. He was relieved to find us



alive, and he somehow managed to take two of our children to his house. Then he informed two other brothers, Justin Rwagatore and Joseph Nduwayezu, that my family was in hiding and that we needed their help. They came immediately, at nighttime; and despite difficulty and danger, they led our family to Justin's house.

"Our stay at Justin's house was very short because by the next day, people knew that we were hiding there. The same day, a man named Vincent came to warn us that the Interahamwe were getting ready to attack and kill us. This man was one of Justin's former Bible students, who had not taken a stand for the truth. Vincent suggested that we first hide in the undergrowth near Justin's house. Then, after dark, he led us to his house. He hid us in a round hut used to shelter goats. It had mud walls, a mud floor, a straw roof, and no windows.

"We spent long days and long nights in that hut, which was near a crossroads only a few yards away from the busiest market in the area. We could hear passersby chatting about what they had done during the day, including appalling accounts of their killings and their plans for the future. This atmosphere increased our fear, and we kept praying for our survival.

"Vincent did everything he could to take care of our needs. We stayed there for a month, and then toward the end of May, the place became too dangerous because of the arrival of Interahamwe militiamen who were fleeing from Kigali. The brothers decided to transfer us to the house of a brother who had a sort of cellar under his house. He was already hiding three brothers in this cellar. To reach his house, we made a

dangerous nighttime journey of four and a half hours on foot. It rained heavily that night, which was a blessing, since it hid us from the killers.

“This new hiding place was a hole about five feet deep, with a wooden plank that served as a door. To get into the hole, we had to descend by a ladder and then crouch and crawl through a tunnel until we reached a chamber about six and a half feet square. There was the smell of mold, and only the smallest ray of light reached us from a crack in the wall. My wife, Chantal, our five children, and I shared this space with three others. All ten of us stayed six weeks in this claustrophobic hole. We dared not light a candle, since that might betray our presence. However, during all that difficulty and suffering, Jehovah supported us. Brothers risked their lives to bring us food, medicine, and encouraging words. Sometimes we were able to light one candle during the daytime so that we could read the Bible, *The Watchtower*, or the daily text.

“Every story has its end,” Tharcisse continues. “For this story, it came on July 5, 1994. Vincent announced to us that Butare had been taken by the invading army. When we came out of our cellar, some people did not recognize that we were Rwandan, for our skin had become pale because of the lack of sunlight. Moreover, for a time, we lost the ability to speak aloud; we could only whisper. It took us weeks to recover.

“All these events had a profound influence on my wife, who had, for the preceding ten years, refused to study the Bible with Jehovah’s Witnesses. Now, though, she started to study the Bible. When people

asked her why, she replied: 'I was moved by the love that the brothers showed us and the sacrifices they made to save us. I also sensed the powerful hand of Jehovah, who saved us from the machetes of the killers.' She dedicated her life to Jehovah and was baptized at the first assembly after the war.

"We feel so indebted to all the brothers and sisters who contributed to our survival by their actions and their heartfelt prayers. We have experienced their deep and sincere love, which transcended ethnic barriers."

### **HELP FOR ONE WHO HELPED**

Justin Rwagatore, one of the brothers who helped save Brother Seminega's family, was later in need of help himself. In 1986 he had been imprisoned for refusing to become involved in the politics of the ruling government. Some years after protecting the family of Brother Seminega, Justin and some other brothers were again arrested because of their neutral stand. Brother Seminega was part of a delegation to the local authorities to clarify the position of Jehovah's Witnesses toward political involvement. He explained to the authorities that Justin had been instrumental in saving his family. As a result, all the brothers were released from prison.

The example of our brothers during the genocide moved others to accept the truth. Suzanne Lizinde, a Catholic in her mid-60's, saw the role her church played in supporting the genocide. The conduct of Jehovah's Witnesses in her area during the genocide and the love that exists among them moved her to make rapid progress. Suzanne was baptized in January 1998, and she never missed a congregation

meeting, even though she had to walk three miles across the hills to attend. She has also helped her family learn the truth. Today one of her sons is an elder, and one of her grandsons is a ministerial servant.

### **HUNDREDS OF THOUSANDS FLEE**

After being evacuated to Kenya from Rwanda in April 1994, Henk van Bussel, a missionary who had been assigned to Rwanda in 1992, made trips to Goma, in eastern Congo, to help with the relief program for Rwandan refugees. On the Congo side, the brothers patrolled the border crossings, holding up Bible literature and singing or whistling Kingdom songs so that Witnesses crossing from Rwanda would recognize their brothers.

Panic was widespread. As war waged between the government forces and the Rwandan Patriotic Front, hundreds of thousands of people fled to Congo and Tanzania. The rallying point for the brothers who fled to Goma was the Kingdom Hall. Later, a refugee camp was set up just outside of town, which would shelter more than 2,000 people—exclusively Jehovah's Witnesses, their children, and interested people. The brothers established similar camps in other parts of eastern Congo.

Whereas the people who fled were mainly Hutu who were fearing reprisals, the brothers who fled together were Hutu and Tutsi. Getting the Tutsi across the border into Goma was very dangerous, since the killing of Tutsi continued. At one stage, the cost of smuggling Tutsi brothers out of the country was \$100 (U.S.) per person.

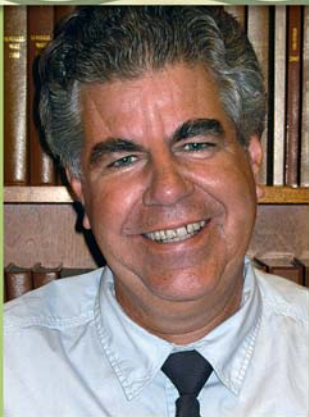
Once they were in Congo, the brothers wanted to stay together. They wanted nothing to do with the

# Someone Was Calling My Name

HENK VAN BUSSEL

**BORN** 1957    **BAPTIZED** 1976

**PROFILE** Served in Netherlands Bethel before attending Gilead in 1984. He was assigned to Central African Republic, to Chad, and then to Rwanda in September 1992. He now serves with his wife, Berthe, in the Rwanda branch office.



■ KIGALI Sud was the first congregation I was assigned to in Rwanda. It included a large number of children. The brothers and sisters were warm and hospitable. Back in 1992, there were not many congregations in the country and there were just over 1,500 publishers. The authorities still didn't trust us, so from time to time, the police interrupted our preaching work to check our identification papers.

When the genocide started, I was obliged to leave the country. But soon after that, I was asked to help the refugees in eastern Congo. From Nairobi, I made the trip to Goma, a city on the border with Rwanda. Having never been there before and having no information other than the name of one elder, I wondered how I would find him. However, upon arrival, I asked for information from my taxi driver. He then conferred with other drivers, and within 30 minutes, I stood in front of the elder's door. Two brothers from the Country Committee in Rwanda were able to cross the border into Goma, and I gave them the money I had received from the Kenya branch office to help the brothers in Rwanda.

The second time I went to Goma from Nairobi, I remember walking to the Rwanda border. Although the distance was short, it took me a long time because I was walking against a huge crowd of refugees surging across from Rwanda.

Suddenly, someone was calling my name: “*Ndugu* (brother) Henk! *Ndugu* Henk!” When I looked for the source of the voice, I looked into the eyes of Alphonsine. She was a girl of about 14 from the congregation I had belonged to in Kigali, and she had been separated from her mother. We stuck together in that vast crowd, and I took her to the Kingdom Hall that many other refugee brothers and sisters were using as a rallying point. A Congolese family looked after her, and after that, a refugee sister from her home congregation took care of her. Alphonsine was later reunited with her mother in Kigali.

***Henk with his wife, Berthe***



Interahamwe, who were active in the camps set up by the United Nations. In addition, most of the non-Witness refugees were sympathetic toward the outgoing government. Jehovah's Witnesses were not liked by them, particularly the Interahamwe, because they had not joined with them. The brothers wanted to keep separate so that they could also protect their Tutsi brothers.

Since those who fled from Rwanda had left their belongings behind, they needed help. That help came from Jehovah's Witnesses in Belgium, Congo, France, Kenya, and Switzerland, in the form of money, medicine, food, and clothing as well as doctors and nurses. On one of the first relief flights, many small tents arrived that had been sent by the France branch. Later, the Belgium branch sent bungalow tents, which could house whole families. Field beds and inflatable air beds were also sent. The branch in Kenya responded by sending more than two tons of clothing and more than 2,000 blankets.

### **THE CHOLERA OUTBREAK**

After fleeing from Rwanda, more than 1,000 Witnesses and interested people stayed at the Goma Kingdom Hall and on the adjoining plot of land. Tragically, as a result of the large number of refugees, there was an outbreak of cholera in Goma. The Congo (Kinshasa) branch quickly sent medicine to combat the epidemic, and Brother Van Bussel flew from Nairobi to Goma with 60 cartons of medicine. The Kingdom Hall was temporarily used as a hospital, and efforts were made to isolate the sick. Loic Domalain and another brother, both medical doctors, along with Aimable Habimana, a medical assistant from Rwanda,



**Goma, Congo**

**Above: Refugee camp for Rwandan  
Witnesses; below: refugee camp for  
Witnesses and others**



**Benaco, Tanzania**



gave of themselves unsparingly. Brother Hamel from France was also of great help during all those problems as were the many other brothers and sisters with medical experience who came as volunteers to care for the sick.

Despite the great efforts made to prevent it, more than 150 brothers and interested people were infected, and about 40 died before the spread of this deadly disease could be checked. Later, a large plot of land was rented, which would be used as a refugee camp for Jehovah's Witnesses. Hundreds of small tents were set up, and a large tent sent from Kenya served as a hospital. American health workers who visited were impressed by the cleanliness and orderliness of the camp.

By early August 1994, the relief committee in Goma was caring for 2,274 refugees—Witnesses, children, and interested people. At the same time, there were many other refugee brothers in Bukavu and Uvira, eastern Congo, as well as in Burundi. Another 230 were in a refugee camp in Tanzania.

When the brothers from the translation office in Kigali were obliged to flee to Goma, they rented a house so that they could continue translation. This work was possible because the brothers had managed to save a computer and a generator during the war and they moved them from Kigali to Goma.

In Goma, telephone and mail services were virtually nonexistent. However, with the help of Witnesses working at the airport, the brothers sent translation material and other mail on a weekly flight from Goma to Nairobi. Brothers at the Kenya branch returned mail to Goma in the same way.

Emmanuel Ngirente and two other translators continued to translate as best they could, though the circumstances were difficult. They had to skip articles of *The Watchtower* because of the war, but the skipped articles were later translated and published in special brochures that the brothers studied at their Congregation Book Study.

### **LIFE IN THE REFUGEE CAMPS**

While the population was still fleeing from Kigali, Francine, who had fled to Goma after the murder of her husband, Ananie, was transferred to one of the camps set up by the Witnesses. She describes life in the camp: “Each day some brothers and sisters were assigned to prepare food. We prepared a simple breakfast consisting of millet or maize gruel. We also prepared the midday meal. After performing our duties, we were free to share in the field service. We witnessed mainly to family members in our own camp who were not Witnesses and also to those living outside the camp. After some time, however, the Interahamwe militiamen, who were in other camps, were angry to see the Witnesses in camps that were separate from the other refugees, and the situation became dangerous.”

By November 1994, it became clear that it was safe for the brothers to return to Rwanda. Doing so, in fact, was advisable in view of the insecurity in the non-Witness camps in Congo. But the return would be difficult. The Interahamwe were hoping to regroup and attack Rwanda, and in their view anyone leaving Congo to return to Rwanda was a deserter.

The brothers informed the government in Rwanda that Jehovah’s Witnesses, who had taken a neutral



**The Kingdom Hall was used as a hospital**



stand in the war and had not participated in the genocide of the Tutsi, wanted to be repatriated. The government advised the brothers to negotiate with the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR), which had vehicles that could be used for the repatriation. However, because the militiamen would have stopped them from returning to Rwanda, the brothers had to use strategy.

The brothers announced that there was to be a special assembly day in Goma, and assembly banners were prepared. They then secretly notified the Witnesses of the repatriation to Rwanda. So as not to arouse suspicion, the brothers were instructed to leave all their belongings behind in the camps and go with just their Bibles and songbooks as though they were going to an assembly.

Francine remembers that they walked for some hours and finally found trucks waiting to take them to the border. On the Rwanda side of the border, the UNHCR arranged to transport them to Kigali and then on to their home areas. Thus most of the brothers with their families and interested ones were repatriated to Rwanda in December 1994. The Belgian newspaper *Le Soir* of December 3, 1994, reported: “1,500 Rwandan refugees decided to leave Zaire [Congo] because they felt that their security was not sufficiently guaranteed. They are Jehovah’s Witnesses who had set up their own camp above the Katala camp. Jehovah’s Witnesses were particularly persecuted by the previous government because they refused to carry arms and to participate in political rallies.”

After returning to Rwanda, Francine was able to attend a district convention in Nairobi. Having been

comforted after the death of her husband and built up by association with the brothers and sisters, Francine returned to the translation office, which had been reestablished in Kigali. Later, she married Emmanuel Ngirente, and they continue working in the branch office.

How was Francine able to cope with her feelings during the war? She said: “We had only one thought in mind at that time—we must endure to the end. We decided not to dwell on the terrible things that were happening. I remember finding comfort in Habakkuk 3:17-19, which speaks of finding joy in difficult situations. The brothers and sisters gave me much encouragement. Some wrote me letters. This helped me to keep a positive spiritual attitude. I remembered that Satan has many tricks. If we dwell on one set of problems, we might become victims of another. If we are not vigilant, we might weaken in one way or another.”

### **RETURN TO RWANDA**

Brother Van Bussel greatly assisted the returning brothers. He explains: “A ‘restart’ program was inaugurated to help the brothers get back on their feet after the war, including those who had stayed in Rwanda and lost almost everything. Appointed brothers visited every congregation to assess the needs. Families and individuals were given a package of supplies according to their circumstances. The brothers understood that after three months they would have to take care of themselves.”

Of course, attention was given to the spiritual needs of the brothers. The translation team returned to their original location in Kigali. Brother Van Bussel

recalls that the house that had served as our office was riddled with bullet holes, but most of the books in the depot were still there. For months afterward, they found bullets in cartons of literature. One of the translators even found a hand grenade in the garden! The following year, about October 1995, the translation team moved into a much larger and more convenient building on the other side of town. This rented building was used as the office and living quarters until a new branch office was built in 2006.

### **“IT WAS LIKE THE RESURRECTION!”**

By December 1994, most of the brothers had returned from Congo just in time for the district convention, which had the appropriate theme “Godly Fear.” It was scheduled to be held on the grounds of one of the Kingdom Halls in Kigali. Brothers from France, Kenya, and Uganda came to attend. On Friday morning, the grounds of the hall were filled with brothers. One sister recalls: “It was touching to see brothers and sisters embracing each other with tears in their eyes. This was the first time they had seen one another since the start of the war. They were discovering friends that they had given up for dead!” Another said, “It was like the resurrection!”

Günter Reschke was among the brothers visiting from Kenya. He said: “What a joy it was to meet again after all the troubles and to see who had survived! There was, however, a problem. The authorities had concerns about such a large crowd meeting together. In the early afternoon, armed soldiers arrived and said that because of security fears, the assembly was canceled. We had to leave the place immediately. We took some time to encourage the friends but finally

had to return to Nairobi, disappointed that the brothers had not been able to enjoy the convention program. However, as discouraging as that was, we felt we had done all we could to encourage our brothers privately to continue in the faith, and we left with the conviction that they were determined to do just that.”

Now that a measure of peace had returned to the country, many people of Rwandan origin who were living outside the country decided to return. Some also came who had been born outside Rwanda after their parents fled during the ethnic and political upheavals of the late 1950's and 1960's. Among this influx were people who had learned the truth in other countries. For example, James Munyaburanga and his family embraced pure worship in the Central African Republic. Because the new government in Rwanda was eager to offer government posts to returning exiles, Brother Munyaburanga was offered a job. However, after returning to Rwanda, he faced opposition and ridicule from his relatives and workmates because he chose to live by Christian principles. Eventually, he requested early retirement and became a regular pioneer. He is now a legal representative of the local organization.

Ngirabakunzi Mashariki learned the truth in eastern Congo. He said: “Because I was a Tutsi, I had endured discrimination for many years. When I came into contact with Jehovah's Witnesses, it was as though I were on a new planet! It was like a miracle to associate with serious people who lived in harmony with what they taught. This love was even more evident during the genocide of Tutsi in 1994. Brothers hid my family and protected us. I was invited to



Bethel in 1998, where I now serve with my wife, Emerance. I eagerly await the new world, where all prejudice and discrimination will be a thing of the past and the earth will be filled with people calling on Jehovah’s name and living together in unity.”

### THE WORK TAKES OFF AGAIN

In March 1994, just before the war, there were 2,500 publishers in Rwanda. By May 1995, a new peak of 2,807 publishers was reached, despite the fact that so many had been killed in the genocide. Sincere ones flocked to Jehovah’s organization. One special pioneer sister, for example, conducted more than 22 Bible studies, and she had others on her waiting list! A circuit overseer observed, “The war helped people to realize that reaching out for material things was useless.”



# Jehovah Has Done Wonderful, Great Things!

GÜNTER RESCHKE

**BORN** 1937    **BAPTIZED** 1953


**PROFILE** Started pioneering in 1958 and attended the 43rd class of Gilead. Since 1967 he has served in Gabon, Central African Republic, and Kenya and has visited several other countries in the traveling work. At present, he is on the Rwanda Branch Committee.



■ MY FIRST visit to Rwanda was in 1980. I was sent from Kenya as a district overseer. At that time, there were only seven congregations in the country and 127 publishers. I was also one of the two instructors of the first class of the Pioneer Service School held in the country. Many of the 22 pioneers in the class are still in full-time service. I returned to Kenya with fond memories of the zeal of the brothers in the ministry and their appreciation for the truth.

In 1996, I got a letter from the Kenya branch, inviting me to move to Rwanda. I had been in Kenya for 18 years, and I loved it there. When we arrived in Rwanda, it was still unstable. During the night we often heard shooting. But soon I started enjoying my assignment, especially when I witnessed Jehovah's blessing on the work there.

The assembly sites were rudimentary. However, without complaint the brothers often sat on the ground or on stones. The baptism pools consisted of a big hole in the ground, lined with tent material. Assemblies like that are still held in many places in the interior, but as time passed,



some simple open-sided halls were constructed as well as a few expandable Kingdom Halls.

The brothers were zealous in proclaiming the good news. The congregations in Kigali started their meetings very early on the weekends. Afterward, publishers went into the field ministry and continued until dark.

I always made time for the young ones in the congregations, the future publishers who could later take on more responsibilities. How good to see that many fearlessly took their stand, proving that though young in years, they had a personal relationship with Jehovah!

For example, in the south, 11-year-old Luc was asked to sing the national anthem in his school classroom. He respectfully asked if he could sing one of our Kingdom songs instead. The teacher agreed, and all applauded when Luc finished the song. The fact that he knew not only the melody but also the words of the song shows how much this youth enjoyed praising his Creator. This experience and others were encouraging to me. I also met a sister who had been imprisoned some years back for preaching the good news. While in prison she gave birth to a son and named him “Shikama Hodari” (Swahili for “remain steadfast”). Shikama has lived up to his name. He recently attended the Bible School for Single Brothers and serves as a ministerial servant and special pioneer.

During the many years when our brothers in Rwanda experienced extreme difficulties—including bans, civil war, and genocide—I was always touched by their zeal in the ministry and their faithfulness, and it is a great privilege to serve with them. I also always felt Jehovah’s blessing as well as his protection and support, and it made me draw closer to him. Truly, Jehovah has done wonderful, great things!—Ps. 136:4.

In January 1996, the brothers held the “Joyful Praisers” District Convention. What a joyful convention it was! Since the one the previous year had been canceled, it was the first convention held after the war. One observer said, “There was hugging, along with tears, and it was particularly impressive to see Hutu and Tutsi brothers and sisters embracing each other.” The peak attendance was 4,424, and 285 were baptized. Brother Reschke reminisces: “It was moving to hear the candidates loudly reply ‘Yego!’ (yes) to the two baptismal questions. They lined up on the playing field, waiting to be baptized, and were drenched by a heavy thunderstorm. They didn’t mind that. Their attitude was, ‘We are going to get wet anyway!’ ”

Henk van Bussel returned to Rwanda; and Günter Reschke, who had come to help get the work restarted, was now assigned there permanently. Not long afterward, Godfrey and Jennie Bint also returned to Rwanda.

### **THEIR SON WAS LOST AND WAS FOUND!**

In the years after the war, families who had been separated were reunited. In 1994, for example, when the fighting between the two armies intensified in Kigali, the population fled en masse, and in the ensuing panic, Oreste Murinda got separated from his wife and fled with his two-and-a-half-year-old son to Gitarama. When Oreste went out to find food, fighting broke out again, and in the confusion he was separated from his son.

After the war, Oreste and his wife were reunited, but their son was still missing. They concluded that he had been killed. However, more than two years later, a man from the countryside, who was not a Witness,

came to Kigali to work. He met some brothers and happened to mention that his neighbor's family in Gisenyi had lost their children in the war but were looking after an orphan. This child remembered his father's name and said that his parents were Jehovah's Witnesses. The brothers recognized the name and contacted the parents, who then showed photographs of their son to the man. Yes, it was their son! Oreste immediately went to retrieve him, and the parents were reunited with their son after two and a half years! The boy is now a baptized publisher.

It is noteworthy that the brothers cared for all the children who survived the death of their Witness parents. None were put into orphanages. Sometimes brothers also cared for the orphaned children of their neighbors or of other family members. One couple, who had ten children of their own, took in and

cared for ten orphans.

***Oreste with his family, 1996***



## **INSECURITY RETURNS TO THE NORTH**

By the end of 1996, civil war in Congo made it increasingly difficult to maintain security in the refugee camps, where over a million Rwandan refugees remained. In November, the refugees were forced either to return to Rwanda or to flee further into the rain forests of Congo. Most re-

turned, including the remaining brothers who had not done so in December 1994. It was an unforgettable sight to see streams of people, old and young, walking through the streets of Kigali in clothes dusty with the African soil, carrying bundles on their heads. All those refugees had to return to their native hill, or community, to be reregistered. Security became very tight for some time.

Unfortunately, many undesirable elements returned with the refugees, including some of the Interahamwe militiamen, who tried to continue their activities in the northwest of the country. In response, the army was sent there to restore security. Many of our brothers lived in the area, and it was a great challenge for them to keep their neutrality. More than 100 publishers lost their lives between 1997 and 1998, in most cases because of loyally maintaining their Christian neutrality. At times, the area was too dangerous for the circuit overseers to visit on a regular basis.

### **A COURAGEOUS COUPLE**

Théobald Munyampundu, with his wife, Berancille, was one of the few circuit overseers who managed to visit the congregations in the region of insecurity. Danger was not new to them. Théobald was baptized in 1984, and two years later he was one of the many brothers and sisters put into prison, where he was severely beaten. He and his wife had also risked their lives hiding others during the genocide of the Tutsi. After saving the life of one teenage boy whose mother was killed in the genocide, they managed to cross over into Tanzania. There Théobald visited the two refugee camps at Benaco and Karagwe to encourage the brothers, though travel between the camps was extremely



***Théobald and Berancille  
Munyampundu***

hazardous because of bandits.

When they were back in Rwanda, Théobald and his wife risked their lives once again to visit Witnesses in the troubled northwest region of the country. “Sometimes the congregations we visited were distant,” said Théobald. “Because of the insecurity, we could

not stay overnight. I remember that during one visit, daily we had to walk four hours each way during the downpours of the rainy season to visit the brothers and then return to our accommodations in the evening.”

Théobald described one brother whom he met while visiting an isolated group in the area: “Jean-Pierre is blind, but I was amazed to see him get up for the Bible reading in the Theocratic Ministry School and recite the assigned portion from memory, without mistakes, even with the correct punctuation! He had asked a brother who was a good reader to read to him beforehand so that he could commit the material to memory. I was really encouraged by his determination.”

Reflecting on his full and sometimes dangerous life, Théobald says: “During all those difficult times, we put our trust in Jehovah and often thought of the words of Hebrews 13:6: ‘Jehovah is my helper; I will not be afraid. What can man do to me?’” After serving faithfully in the circuit and district work, he and

his wife continue to serve as special pioneers despite health problems.

### **ASSEMBLY HALL PROJECT**

As the number of Witnesses increased, it became more and more difficult to find suitable venues for conventions in Kigali. For example, a drainage canal that spewed out sewage from a nearby prison marred the “Messengers of Godly Peace” District Convention that was held in a stadium in December 1996. Brothers complained of the smell, and parents feared for the health of their children. In view of the poor conditions, the Country Committee decided unanimously that this would be the last district convention they would ever hold in that stadium. But where else could conventions be held?

The Ministry of Lands had allotted land to one of the Kigali congregations

***Tutsi and Hutu brothers and sisters clearing the land for the new Assembly Hall***







***Open-sided Assembly Hall, Kigali, 2006***

for the construction of a Kingdom hall. The land was much larger than would be needed for a hall, and if the brothers submitted plans for a Kingdom Hall only, the ministry would likely cut off a portion of the plot and allocate it to someone else. So with trust in Jehovah, they submitted plans for a Kingdom Hall and a simple Assembly Hall, with the option of building a second Kingdom Hall later. The local authorities approved the plans.

The brothers leveled the land and fenced it in. Hundreds of volunteers cleared the undergrowth and dug deep latrines. They now had a beautiful piece of land with a gentle slope, an ideal assembly location.

In the following months, the brothers held two assemblies and a special meeting on the property, but strong winds and rain forced those attending to huddle under tarpaulins and umbrellas. Consequently, a recommendation was made to the Governing Body that a simple open-sided Assembly Hall be constructed.

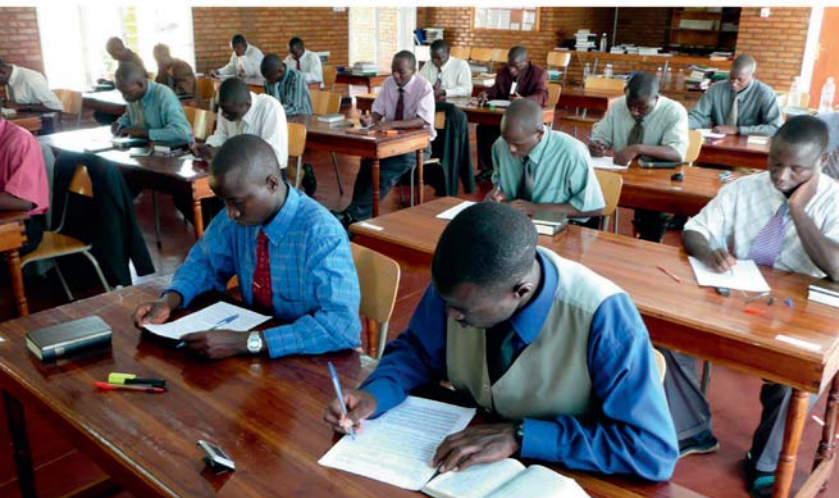


In March 1998, the Governing Body gave permission to build the Assembly Hall. Preliminary work started quickly. Throughout the construction period, entire families worked together digging the holes for the foundations of the supports. All worked side by side in unity. On March 6, 1999, Jean-Jules Guilloud from the Switzerland branch gave the dedication talk for this fine new facility.

By 1999, security returned to the whole country. In February of that year, a new missionary couple, Ralph and Jennifer Jones, were assigned to work in the Rwanda country office, and the Bethel family grew to 21.

Two Rwandan brothers had graduated from the Ministerial Training School (now called the Bible School for Single Brothers) in Kinshasa, Congo, about 1,000 miles away. However, now that there was war in Congo, it became increasingly difficult for Rwandans

***Ministerial Training School, Kigali, 2008***



to travel to Kinshasa. In view of this, the Governing Body approved of holding the Ministerial Training School in Kigali. The first class of 28 students from Burundi, Congo, and Rwanda graduated in December 2000.

In May 2000, Rwanda became a branch, and soon after that, the brothers found a suitable plot on which to build a branch office to take care of the rapidly expanding work. They purchased the five-acre plot of land in April 2001. Many brothers in Kigali will remember what a tough job it was to clear the undergrowth on that land, which had been abandoned for years.

### **A VOLCANO ERUPTS IN EASTERN CONGO**

On January 17, 2002, the Nyiragongo volcano, situated about ten miles from Goma in eastern Congo, started to erupt, and most of the population in the area had to flee from their homes. Many of the 1,600 publishers there fled with their children and interested ones across the border into nearby Gisenyi, Rwanda, where they were directed to nearby Kingdom Halls.

The next day brothers at the Rwanda branch office loaded a three-ton truck with basic supplies, including food, blankets, and medicine. The supplies were swiftly delivered to six Kingdom Halls in the area near the border with Congo.

For security reasons, the Rwanda government was afraid to let so many Congolese citizens stay in the Kingdom Halls and insisted that they be relocated to refugee camps. A delegation from the Rwanda Branch Committee met in Goma with two members of the Congo Branch Committee and elders from the congre-

gations in Goma to decide what to do. The Congolese brothers insisted that they did not want their brothers to go to refugee camps in Rwanda. “In 1994 we looked after more than 2,000 Rwandan brothers and their families and interested people,” they said, “so rather than let our brothers be housed in camps, let them return to Goma, and we will look after them just as we looked after the Rwandan brothers.”

What the Congolese brothers did was an act of loving hospitality in taking their own people back and distributing them among their brothers instead of allowing them to live in camps run by non-Witness organizations. So the brothers and their families returned to Goma, where they were accommodated. Thereafter, more relief supplies, including plastic tarpaulins, were sent from Belgium, France, and Switzerland to help during that time. The brothers remained in Goma until new houses could be built for them.

### **THEOCRATIC MILESTONES**

As for the new branch, the Regional Engineering Office in South Africa drew up the plans, and a local contractor was hired for the construction. International volunteers helped with the project, and many local Witnesses volunteered to help with the landscaping and other finishing work. Despite some setbacks and challenges, the Bethel family moved into the beautiful new branch in March 2006. Later that year, Guy Pierce from the Governing Body came with his wife for the special dedication program on December 2, 2006. Some 553 brothers and sisters, including 112 delegates from 15 different countries, were in attendance.

Jim and Rachel Holmes, from Canada, worked on the construction project. They knew American Sign Language and offered to teach it after the Monday Bethel family *Watchtower* Study to any members of the Bethel family who would be interested. Six responded, and they became so proficient that very soon a sign-language group was started.

Then, in June 2007, Kevin Rupp, a graduate of the Ministerial Training School in Switzerland, came to Rwanda as a missionary to help in the sign-language field. Shortly afterward, a Canadian missionary couple with sign-language experience arrived in Rwanda. In July 2008, the brothers formed a sign-language congregation, and soon more groups followed.

How excited the brothers were to hear the announcement at the 2007 district convention that the

***Sign-language section at a special  
assembly day in Gisenyi, 2011***



*New World Translation of the Christian Greek Scriptures* in Kinyarwanda had been completed! The United Bible Societies had produced the complete Bible in Kinyarwanda in 1956. Although this translation was a sincere effort to render the Bible in the local language, even using the name YEHOVA (Jehovah) seven times in the Hebrew Scriptures, the *New World Translation* is more readily available to all, especially to those of modest means. This new translation is accurate and easy to read, thanks to the painstaking efforts of the local translators in collaboration with the Translation Services Department in New York. How heartwarming it is to see most of the children in the Kingdom Hall holding their own copy of the Greek Scriptures and eagerly raising their hands to read a scripture when asked to do so during the meetings!



### **NEW CHALLENGES OF NEUTRALITY**

Although they have enjoyed religious freedom since obtaining legal recognition in 1992, the brothers have faced ongoing problems as a result of their Christian neutrality. Over the past 15 years, hundreds of brothers have been arrested because of not participating in militarily supervised night patrols. However, after delegations met with government ministers, the authorities agreed to let the brothers do alternative work.

In recent years, 215 schoolteachers have lost their jobs because of refusal to attend a politically oriented seminar. Thereafter, 118 schoolchildren were expelled from schools for refusing to sing the national anthem. Branch representatives went to the authorities to explain our neutral position, and after many months, most of the children were allowed to return to school. Referring to the history of the work in Rwanda, the brothers pointed out that in 1986, Jehovah's Witnesses were put in prison because of their neutrality, yet in 1994, their neutrality was a key factor in their not participating in the genocide.—John 17:16.

Jehovah's Witnesses obey governmental laws, and they maintain political neutrality no matter what government is in power. For example, in 1986, François-Xavier Hakizimana was imprisoned for 18 months because of his neutral stand. After the government changed following the genocide, he was again imprisoned in 1997 and 1998 for the same reason. Such examples show that the neutral stand taken by Jehovah's Witnesses is consistent and not in opposition

***François-Xavier  
Hakizimana***



to any particular government. Christian neutrality is genuinely based on principles set out in the Scriptures.

Apart from these ongoing challenges, the brothers enjoy freedom to hold weekly meetings and conventions and are also permitted to preach and hold meetings in many prisons, where a good number of inmates have accepted the truth. In addition,

in the 2009 service year, six court cases were decided in favor of Jehovah's people in Rwanda.

### **THE FUTURE LOOKS BRIGHT**

An account of Rwanda would be incomplete without a word about the amazingly successful Kingdom Hall construction program. Since the new arrangement for building Kingdom Halls in countries with limited resources started in 1999, some 290 modest but attractive Kingdom Halls have been built there by willing volunteers.

With enthusiastic support from the local publishers, the brothers complete most of these halls in three months. As Kingdom Halls spring up throughout the country, onlookers are curious, opening opportunities for Jehovah's people to give a witness. Besides the Assembly Hall in Kigali, the brothers have constructed ten smaller and simpler open-sided Assembly Halls, enabling the publishers to attend assemblies without having to walk excessive distances over the mountainous terrain. In addition, the brothers have completed four expandable Kingdom Halls, making it possible to hold assemblies on those properties.

In the first few months of each calendar year, all congregations zealously participate in working unassigned or seldom-worked territory. Publishers sometimes travel considerable distances at their own expense to cover this territory. For areas farther away, temporary special pioneers are sent out for three months. As a result, newly formed groups lay the foundation for future congregations. For example, in the campaign of January through March 2010, hundreds of Bible studies were started and nine new groups were formed. In addition, during the same

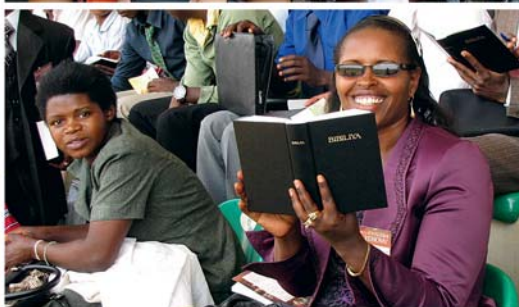
period, 30 temporary special pioneers started 15 new groups.

### **ANOTHER MILESTONE FOR RWANDA**

At the 2009 “Keep on the Watch!” District Convention, the brothers in Rwanda were thrilled to learn about the release of the new songbook and to hear a selection of the new songs sung in Kinyarwanda. Not only was the new songbook translated into Kinyarwanda promptly but the congregations also received their copies in time to start singing the new songs at the meetings with the rest of the worldwide brotherhood in January 2010.

Understandably, after the release of the *New World Translation of the Christian Greek Scriptures* in Kinyarwanda in 2007, everyone wondered when the complete Bible would be translated into Kinyarwanda. As the time for the 2010 district conventions approached, it was announced that Guy Pierce, a member of the Governing Body, would be visiting Rwanda at the time of the convention for Kigali in August. The convention would be held in the sports stadium just across the road from the branch. Excitement was in the air, and how wonderful it was when Brother Pierce announced the release of the complete *New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures* in Kinyarwanda! Each of the 7,149 people present on Friday morning received a personal copy of the new Bible. On Sunday, brothers from other districts of Rwanda swelled the attendance to 11,355. During the convention, soldiers who had been marching outside requested copies of the new Bible, and 180 were distributed to them. The mayor of Kigali, the chief of police, and authorities from the Ministry of Sports also gratefully accepted copies.





The work of preaching the good news in Rwanda started in 1970 with three publishers. Now there are some 20,000 publishers in the country. They conduct about 50,000 Bible studies each month. In April 2011, 87,010 people attended the Memorial. The brothers in Rwanda have a history of and a reputation for zealous activity. With about 25 percent of the publishers in some form of full-time service and the remaining publishers averaging 20 hours a month, our brothers are busy working alongside “the Master of the harvest” in this fertile field, with no intention of slowing down. As Jehovah continues to bless the work, we wait with anticipation to see how many more people will stream to Jehovah’s mountain of true worship in this Land of a Thousand Hills.—Matt. 9:38; Mic. 4:1, 2.



**Brothers and sisters  
working alongside  
“the Master of the  
harvest” in this fertile  
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of slowing down**







# TIME LINE

## Rwanda



◀ First Rwandan family returns from Congo. **1975**

The monthly edition of *The Watchtower* is printed in Kinyarwanda. **1978**

**1980**

One third of all publishers are imprisoned. **1986**

First district convention is held for the whole country.

The work is registered.

Missionaries arrive. **1992**

Missionaries return. **1996**

The Service Department is set up.

Kigali open-sided Assembly Hall is dedicated. **1999**

**2000**

Plot of land for new branch is obtained. **2001**

▼ New branch facilities are dedicated. **2006**



**1970** — **1970** First publishers report.

— **1976** “*This Good News of the Kingdom*” booklet is published in Kinyarwanda. ►

— **1982** The work is banned; responsible brothers are imprisoned.



**1990** — **1990** War breaks out in the north of the country.

— **1994** Genocide of the Tutsi. ►

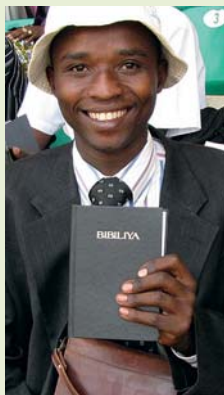


— **1998** Kinyarwanda edition of *The Watchtower* is simultaneous with English.

— **2000** Branch office is established. Kingdom Hall Construction Desk starts operating.

— **2007** *New World Translation of the Christian Greek Scriptures* is released in Kinyarwanda.

**2010** — **2010** Complete *New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures* is released in Kinyarwanda. ►



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You may contact Jehovah's Witnesses at **[www.jw.org](http://www.jw.org)**.