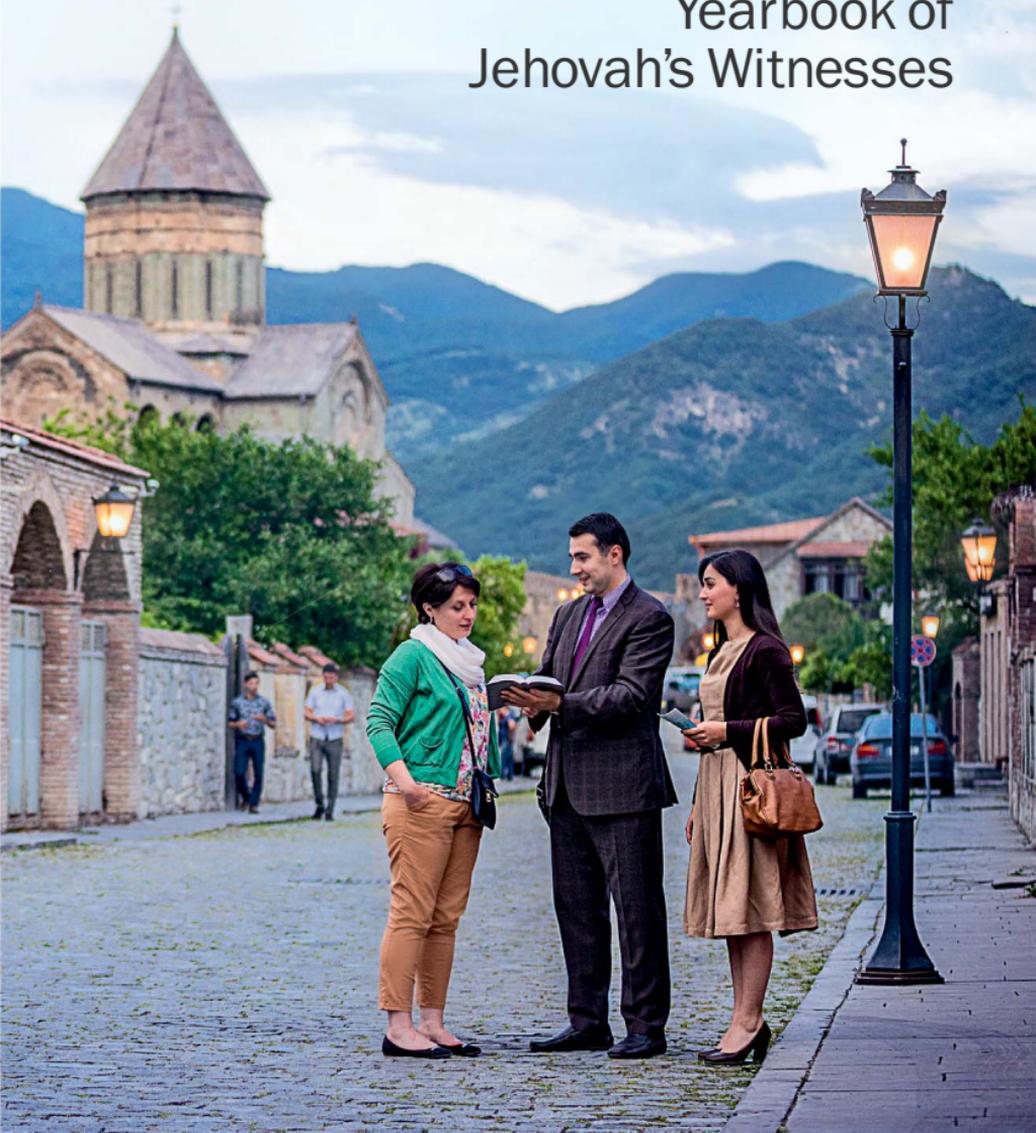


# 2017

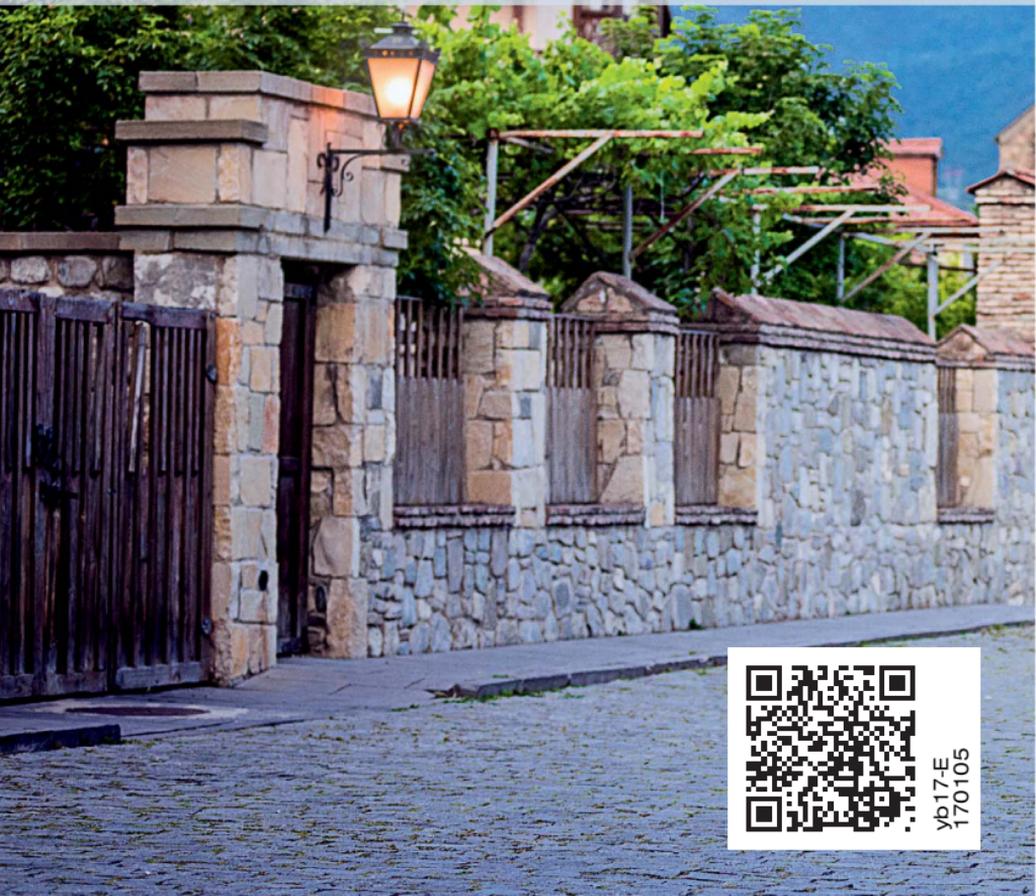
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Yearbook of  
Jehovah's Witnesses



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Translation of the Holy Scriptures*.

*2017 Yearbook of Jehovah's Witnesses*  
September 2016 Printing  
English (yb17-E)

© 2016  
Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society  
of Pennsylvania  
Publishers  
Watchtower Bible and Tract Society of  
New York, Inc., Wallkill, New York, U.S.A.  
Made in the United States of America



# My Spiritual Goals for 2017

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Bible Reading and Study

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Preaching and Teaching

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Christian Living and Qualities

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This book belongs to

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2017

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Yearbook of  
Jehovah's Witnesses

Containing the Report for the  
Service Year of 2016

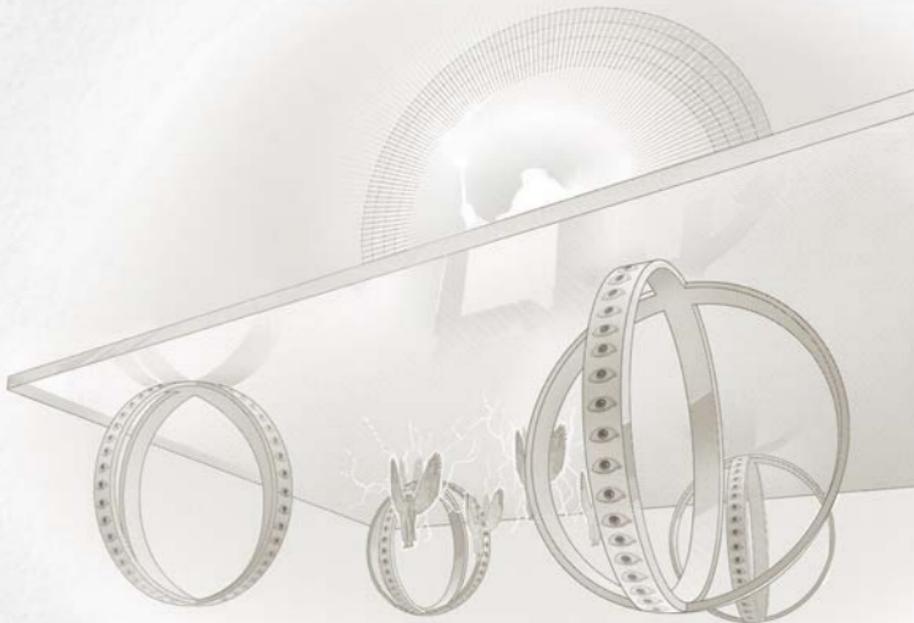
# A Letter From the Governing Body

Dear Brothers and Sisters:

Back in the seventh century B.C.E., the prophet Ezekiel was given an amazing vision. He saw a gigantic vehicle, a celestial chariot, under the control of the Sovereign of the universe. Most impressive about that vehicle was the way it moved. It swept along at lightning speed, even when changing direction—which it could do without slowing down or even turning! —Ezek. 1:4, 9, 12, 14, 16-27.

That vision reminds us that the celestial part of Jehovah's universal organization is always on the move. And the earthly part? The past service year has clearly shown that Jehovah is moving his organized people on earth at an amazing pace as well!

Here in the United States, members of the Bethel family have been busy moving out of Brooklyn and into the new world headquarters, at Warwick, New York, as well as to other complexes and into the field. Bethelites at a number of other branches around the world are likewise busy with building, remodeling, consolidating, or moving to new locations. What about you? Even if you have not been busy moving physically, you have no doubt been on the move in other ways.



The celestial part of Jehovah's organization is always on the move

The Governing Body is deeply touched and encouraged to see that God's people around the world have been busier than ever as they keep pace with Jehovah's organization. Many have moved to serve where the need is greater. Others have moved into a new avenue of service, such as a foreign-language field. Many have tried a form of witnessing that was new and unfamiliar to them. Many more have expanded their service in yet other ways. And all faithful Christians, including the elderly and the infirm, are loyally running the race for life—keeping on the move in Jehovah's service and thus helping to expose Satan for the liar he is! —1 Cor. 9:24.

Be assured that the spirit you show does not go unnoticed by Jehovah. (Heb. 6:10) Your willing attitude

makes us think of Abraham and Sarah. In his 70s, Abraham moved out of the Chaldean city of Ur and led his family to faraway Canaan, where he would live in tents for the remaining hundred years of his life. What a willing spirit he and his dear wife showed! —Gen. 11:31; Acts 7:2, 3.

Are you showing that spirit? All of you who are enduring faithfully in these challenging times are doing what Jesus told us to do. He said: “Go, therefore, and make disciples of people of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the holy spirit.”—Matt. 28:19.

Even Jesus’ use of the word “go” suggests that we must be moving, active. How gratifying it is to see how much has been accomplished by Christ’s zealous followers during the past year! It is easy to see that Jehovah’s mighty hand of blessing has been on the work of declaring the Kingdom good news in all nations. —Mark 13:10.

Many are responding to the message. The peak number of publishers this past year was 8,340,847, while our Bible studies averaged 10,115,264 each month. Clearly, the celestial chariot is on the move, and so are you! Keep up your fine work in the short period of time left before Jehovah closes the door to salvation.

How fitting that our yeartext for 2017 is “**Trust in Jehovah and do what is good**”! (Ps. 37:3) When you obey those words, doing what is good by rendering sacred service to Jehovah, you are showing your trust in him. Please always keep in mind that you are never

## “Trust in Jehovah and do what is good”

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alone. Jesus’ words will ever hold true: “Look! I am with you all the days until the conclusion of the system of things.”—Matt. 28:20.

Rest assured that Jehovah will continue to bless your faithful service. Whether your contribution is small or great, what matters to Jehovah is that it represents your best and is given with the right motive. All such gifts touch his heart and bring his smile of approval. (2 Cor. 9:6, 7) So continue drawing close to your loving Father through regular prayer, study of God’s Word, attendance at Christian meetings, and active participation in the ministry.

Until this “short period of time” allotted to the Devil runs out, that wicked rebel is bent on using every means at his disposal to divert us from our course of remaining steadfast in our integrity to Jehovah. (Rev. 12:12) Stay close to Jehovah, and the Devil will fail in his every attempt. (Ps. 16:8) Please know that we love you very much and appreciate your assistance in caring for the Lord’s Kingdom interests in these last days.

Your brothers,

*Governing Body of Jehovah’s Witnesses*

# Highlights of the past year

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Warwick, NY  
World Headquarters



AS Satan’s world experiences one calamity after another, Jehovah’s true worshippers continue to have “plenty to do in the work of the Lord.” (1 Cor. 15:58) The following reports show how Jehovah’s Witnesses throughout the world endeavor to display “trust in Jehovah . . . , do what is good . . . , and act with faithfulness.”—Ps. 37:3.

### **World Headquarters and Branch Office Relocation**

The expansion of the facilities at Wallkill, New York, was completed on February 1, 2016, allowing for the transfer of the United States Branch Committee, the Service Department, and other United States branch departments to that site. And with work on the new world headquarters at Warwick coming





Wallkill, NY ▲  
Warwick, NY ▼





to completion, the Brooklyn Bethel family has undertaken the huge task of moving out of New York City and into the countryside.

On Monday, April 3, 2017, world headquarters at Warwick will open for tours, which will include three self-guided exhibits and a guided tour.

1. **“The Bible and the Divine Name”** features rare Bibles and highlights the fact that God’s name belongs in the Scriptures.

2. **“A People for Jehovah’s Name”** presents a visual history of the spiritual heritage of Jehovah’s Witnesses, showing how Jehovah has progressively guided, taught, and organized his people to do his will.

3. **“World Headquarters—Faith in Action”** is an interactive exhibit that explains what the Governing Body committees do to help Jehovah’s people to meet together, to make disciples, to take in spiritual food, and to show love toward one another.

These **self-guided tours** will be available Monday through Friday from 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. Visitors will also be able to enjoy a **20-minute guided tour** that will highlight certain sections of the Offices/Services Building and the Bethel grounds. The brief **guided tours** will be available Monday through Friday from 8:00 a.m. to 11:00 a.m. and from 1:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m.

Before planning your visit, please check [jw.org](http://jw.org) and look under ABOUT US > OFFICES & TOURS > United States.



## Giving Priority to the Global Preaching Work

ON Wednesday, September 23, 2015, the Governing Body informed the worldwide Bethel family of a number of organizational changes that were being made in order to make the best use of dedicated funds. Then, on Saturday, October 3, 2015, an announcement from the Governing Body explained: “At Philippians 1:10, we are told to ‘make sure of the more important things.’ In harmony with this wise advice, we [the Governing Body] desire to give priority to those activities that contribute the most to the spiritual welfare of God’s people and the advancement of the global preaching work.”

Stephen Lett of the Governing Body further explained on JW Broadcasting: “The Governing Body is so serious about advancing Kingdom interests in the field that we have reanalyzed ways we can cut back at all the branches so as to redirect more funds to the field. For example, many long-standing Bethel routines and services are being reduced or eliminated. This will result in fewer members of the Bethel family being required.”

Hence, since September 2015, some 5,500 members of the worldwide Bethel family have returned to the field. Although these changes have required big adjustments, Jehovah’s blessing has been evident, and the changes have invigorated the preaching and teaching work.

A couple in **Sri Lanka** who were assigned from Bethel to the field viewed the move as an opportunity to demonstrate their faith in Jehovah and their confidence in his organization. They wrote: “We were not sure what the road ahead would be like. But we knew for certain that Jehovah would not abandon us. So we prayed, ‘Please, Jehovah, whatever situation we have to face, help us to make adjustments so that both of us can serve as regular pioneers.’ During the first month, we had very little materially. However, we felt Jehovah’s love and care, and we now have a regular income to cover our expenses. We have a busy schedule including housework, secular employment, and pioneering. But we are able to manage our time well because of the training we received at Bethel. There is nothing more satisfying than helping people come to know the truth, and we are very happy that we can do this as pioneers.”

Some of the reassigned Bethelites in **Colombia** have learned a new language and have moved to distant areas to share the Kingdom message with isolated populations there. These brothers and sisters have been a blessing to their new congregations too. A circuit overseer wrote regarding a couple who were assigned to a congregation in the circuit he is serving: “Brothers and sisters in the congregation really appreciate their help. The congregation’s participation in the field ministry has improved, and local brothers are being trained to care for various responsibilities in the congregation.” Many former Bethelites have also made themselves available to serve at Bethel as part-time commuters one or more days a week.

A brother who had served at Bethel in **Japan** for 31 years was assigned to a congregation where there were only two elders. Since the congregation was scheduled to remodel the Kingdom Hall, he did not plan to do any secular work for two weeks. But just before the renovation, a magnitude 7.0 earthquake hit the Kumamoto area, where his congregation was situated. Because he had not scheduled his secular work, he was able to take the lead in the relief work and in the shepherding work following the earthquake. “Thinking back,” he says, “I can say that Jehovah put me in one of the places where the need would be greatest.”

Phil and Sugar, who had served in the **Australasia** branch, explain: “When we were reassigned, we were determined to keep a simple life. We prayed for Jehovah to give us guidance that would help us make good

decisions and to bless any decision we made. All we wanted to do was make ourselves available for the ministry in a congregation in a foreign land. Jehovah surely has blessed our decisions and smoothed our path so that we can serve him whole-souled!" They now serve in an English group on Samal Island, Davao, Philippines, where there are 34 publishers and 9 regular pioneers. They now have about 120 addresses of interested persons to follow up on. "There is much enjoyable work to be done. We are happy that we relied fully on Jehovah. It has surely increased our faith and love for him!"

A single sister in **Russia** who was reassigned as a special pioneer relates: "Pioneer service allows me the opportunity to share more fully in the most important, never-to-be-repeated work of preaching about God's Kingdom. I find much joy in being an instrument in Jehovah's hands." Currently she conducts six Bible studies. Her students include people from Iraq, Nigeria, Sri Lanka, Syria, and Zambia.

Many Bethel family members in **Zambia** have been assigned as regular pioneers. They are finding it refreshing to have a greater share in the field ministry. "Within a short time after leaving Bethel, we helped two persons who were illiterate to read and write," reports Andrew, who serves as a pioneer with his wife. "One of our students, a ten-year-old boy, will soon give his first assignment at the midweek meeting. One married couple to whom we witnessed attended the

**Zambia:** Former Bethel family members being warmly welcomed by their new congregation



Memorial and have not missed the congregation meetings since. They are making ex-

cellent progress in their study of the Bible. We feel that all of this would not have been possible if we had not followed Jehovah's direction, recognized his support, and waited for his blessing."

Edson and Artness, who also live in **Zambia**, had been married for only a few months when they were reassigned to the field. Artness relates: "Our Bethel training has helped us to economize in the use of our limited resources and to remain happy and debt free. We do not regret having reached out for Bethel service. We have learned how to adjust spiritual goals and attain them with Jehovah's help. Our faith in Jehovah has been refined, and we are prepared to continue being loyal to Jehovah."



## “You Are the Best Neighbors”

ON May 7 and 8, 2016, there was a buzz of anticipation in the lobby of the world headquarters at 25 Columbia Heights, Brooklyn, New York. Although the lobby and tour displays were not usually open on weekends, on this occasion neighbors living in the area around Bethel had been invited to an open house to view our historical Bible display.

The invitation campaign gave a wonderful witness in the community and proved to be spiritually refreshing to those who had a share in it. It was especially encouraging to hear many positive expressions from our long-time neighbors.

“I have lived in different homes in the [area around Bethel] since the 1960’s,” said one man, “and you have been the best of neighbors. We are really going to miss you, and we wish you were not moving.”

“The neighborhood would not have developed as it did without you,” said one woman. “We are very grateful to have had you as our neighbors all these years.”

Many of the pioneers covering the territory were pleased at how cordial and receptive those in the neighborhood were. A gentleman connected with a neighborhood association expressed great appreciation for our organization and said that he sincerely regretted that he would be out of town during the open house.

The results of this initiative were most encouraging. Over the two days, 48 non-Witness visitors came to see the Bible display. During the open house, there were a number of Bethel family members on hand in the lobby to welcome and converse with visiting neighbors.

Sally, a young woman in her late 20’s, spent about half an hour in the exhibit. When she came, the pioneers who had given her the invitation happened to be in the lobby. Sally said that she had never realized that the Bibles were on display. The pioneers mentioned to her how nice it was to meet a young professional who had an appreciation for the Bible. Sally replied: “It’s so important. The Bible is the only way we can know God’s message. It’s a living document for our lives.”

Sally mentioned that her feelings about the Bible had moved her to study Latin and Greek and that she

was very interested in translation. She felt that correct translation is important so that the message does not conform to some person's agenda. When the pioneers told Sally that our jw.org website has Bible-based content translated into over 800 languages, she threw her head back in disbelief and delight. When the sisters explained to her what translators had done with the name Jehovah, she was shocked and asked, "Why is Jehovah's name taken out of the Bible?" As she was leaving, Sally said, "This is the only neighborhood I've lived in, and you are the best neighbors."

On the Monday after the open house, a cleric came up to John, a Bethelite who was doing cart witnessing near Bethel. He told John how much he enjoyed visiting the open house and how nice it is that we stick to the Bible. After conversing for a while, though, he suddenly said, "I'm mad at the Witnesses!" John was confused and asked why. "Because you people are moving out! STAY HERE! Buy bigger buildings, or build whatever you want, but stay here. You people stabilize this neighborhood. I'm so upset to see you moving up north!"

Overall, the invitation campaign and open house for the Bible display gave a fine witness to the community, and God's name was highlighted to our neighbors as never before.



## A New Meeting for Our Christian Life and Ministry

AT THE annual meeting of the Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society of Pennsylvania on October 3, 2015, Anthony Morris of the Governing Body announced that the Theocratic Ministry School, Service Meeting, and Congregation Bible Study were to be replaced by a new meeting called *Our Christian Life and Ministry*. Brother Morris also explained that *Our Kingdom Ministry* would be replaced by a new four-color, eight-page monthly publication entitled *Our Christian Life and Ministry—Meeting Workbook*, which outlines the weekly meeting schedule and features artwork designed to make personal Bible reading more meaningful.

The new meeting is divided into three main sections:

**1. Treasures From God's Word.** The first part in this section is a ten-minute talk based on the weekly Bible reading and artwork from the workbook. The second part, entitled "Digging for Spiritual Gems," is an eight-minute question-and-answer discussion of the weekly Bible reading, followed by a four-minute Bible reading.

**2. Apply Yourself to the Field Ministry.** Generally in this section, three students demonstrate how to teach on an initial call, a return visit, and a Bible study.

**3. Living as Christians.** This section considers the practical application of Bible principles in day-to-day life. An important feature of this part is the question-and-answer discussion in the Congregation Bible Study.

Publishers worldwide have expressed appreciation for the practical training the new meeting provides. A brother in **Australia** wrote: "The Life and Ministry Meeting is so good! The material seems more relevant to our lives now, and the presentations are simple. The evening seems to fly by, as the parts are shorter, to the point, and so captivating, especially with videos and the involvement of the children."

A body of elders in **Italy** wrote: "We have noticed that this new meeting has stimulated all of us to prepare more thoroughly and, as a result, improve the quality of teaching. The new midweek meeting is a remarkable refinement of the way Jehovah is teaching his people. A 15-year-old publisher said: 'Before, it was difficult to concentrate for the whole meeting. But this new

# OUR CHRISTIAN LIFE AND MINISTRY

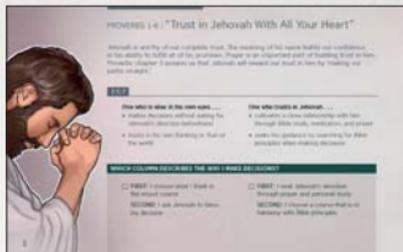
## A NEW MEETING FORMAT



### TREASURES FROM GOD'S WORD

**PURPOSE** To gain a deeper understanding of God's Word—2 Tim. 2:15

**KEY FEATURES** Visual aids and worksheets



### APPLY YOURSELF TO THE FIELD MINISTRY

**PURPOSE** To prepare for the field ministry—2 Tim. 4:5

**KEY FEATURES** Videos and demonstrations of model presentations



### LIVING AS CHRISTIANS

**PURPOSE** To learn to apply Bible principles in daily life—1 Cor. 10:31

**KEY FEATURES** Videos from JW Broadcasting and audience participation in the Congregation Bible Study



meeting has helped me concentrate and prepare better at home.’”

A family from **Austria** wrote: “Our weekly Bible reading with our ten-year-old daughter used to be a challenge. But the section ‘Treasures From God’s Word’ motivated us to comment more freely. All three of us now enjoy preparing for the weekly Bible reading. What is more, we can see our daughter’s spiritual progress.”

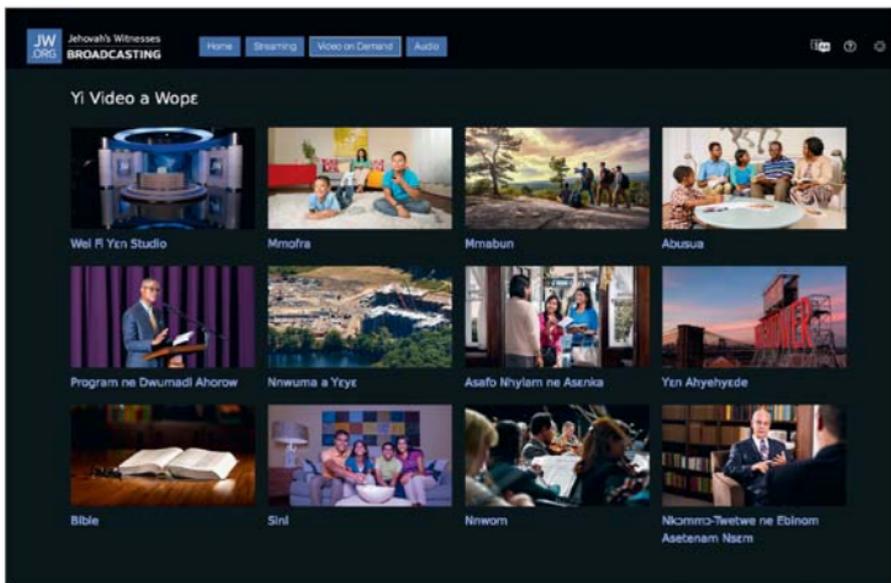
Ines from **Germany** explains: “I feel encouraged to prepare the material and think about it more deeply. I have never done so much research. I now enjoy a better relationship with Jehovah. Satan’s world makes me feel tired and exhausted. The meetings reinvigorate me and help me carry on.”

Congregations in the **Solomon Islands** are thoroughly enjoying the new midweek meeting and are making considerable efforts to benefit fully from it. Many congregations are in remote locations without electricity or Internet service, and the brothers live very simply off the land. How are they able to obtain video equipment and access the monthly videos for the meetings? The publishers in one congregation on the island of Malaita decided to work together to sell dried coconut. They contributed the funds to the congregation so that they could obtain a simple video playback system that can be charged by solar power. And to obtain the videos each month, brothers travel to the nearest location that has Internet access so that they can download the files, which they then share with the other brothers in the congregation.

“I seem to be more of a visual learner,” wrote a brother in the **United States**. “It has been a struggle for me for more than 40 years. I have to read something a few times before I really get to the point where I can explain it to someone else. So I wanted to thank the Governing Body for all the visual learning tools we have received. The video introductions to Bible books are fantastic, and the illustrations in the meeting workbook are exactly what I need! It’s obvious that Jehovah has blessed your efforts in doing this for his people. Thank you so much.”

## Malawi





## JW Broadcasting ‘Gives Us Strength and Refreshment!’

SINCE its launch in 2014, the Internet television station called JW Broadcasting has increasingly provided encouragement and spiritual refreshment to countless viewers around the world. The station is now available in over 90 languages. For instance, programs are now translated into Ewe, Ga, and Twi (as shown), to the delight of the over 130,000 publishers in Benin, Côte d’Ivoire, Ghana, and Togo.\*

“I feel as if Jehovah were talking to me right in my room when I listen to members of the Governing Body and their helpers,” says Agatha, a circuit overseer’s wife

\* JW Broadcasting can be accessed by visiting [tv.jw.org](http://tv.jw.org).

in **Ghana**. “Without this tool, how could a poor girl like me in a small corner of the earth have such a great privilege? It has really brought us much closer to our dear brothers and sisters around the world.”

From **Zambia** comes this report: “Though of limited means, publishers in many congregations put forth the effort to benefit from JW Broadcasting. For example, the Misako Congregation is about 20 miles from the nearest town and is located in a farming area that is crisscrossed with fast-flowing streams during the rainy season.” Simon, a ministerial servant who came to the congregation to serve where the need was greater, explains: “Each month someone from the congregation walks about two hours to reach the main road and from there gets public transport to a town where brothers can download the programs. A 70-year-old man and his two sons had never attended meetings of Jehovah’s Witnesses before, but the man was intrigued that videos would be shown at meetings in such a rural setting. The elderly man said, ‘This is the way to learn about God.’”

A letter of appreciation from **Russia** says: “We have been watching JW Broadcasting for a year and are glad to have such an opportunity. After the first broadcast, we immediately felt unified with the whole brotherhood! It was amazing! We feel that we are one big family! We were very glad to see our dear brothers from the Governing Body. They sincerely try to present food for us at the proper time, and they are accessible to all of us. We look forward to each broadcast. We are even more proud to bear the name Jehovah’s

Witnesses. Thank you, dear brothers! We thank Jehovah and Christ for all their wonderful works. It gives us strength and brings refreshment!”

Horst and Helga, an infirm elderly couple in **Germany**, wrote: “JW Broadcasting is outstanding. We feel strengthened, especially by the experiences of our disabled brothers and sisters. Their examples motivate us to give our best despite our own health problems. Seeing how a paraplegic brother serves as an elder, we learned that everyone can give something valuable to Jehovah. When we see such exemplary brothers and sisters, we just have to thank Jehovah and beg him to bless them richly.”

Kodi, from **England**, says: “Thanks for all the time and effort you put into making jw.org, JW Broadcasting, and the Caleb and Sophia videos. Thank you for making the Bible easier to understand. I was baptized when I was eight. When I’m a bit older, I’m going to volunteer to help build Kingdom Halls! And I would like to work at Bethel. I’m nine now, so I’ve not got long to go.”

Eight-year-old Arabella in **England** wrote: “Thank you for the videos and the activities. It really helps me get to know Jehovah more. The activities pages on jw.org help me to learn about Jehovah while having fun. You are good at making songs that everyone can remember. The Caleb and Sophia videos help me too. Thank you for all your hard work.”



## Branch Dedications

LOCAL and foreign construction volunteers worked tirelessly for one and a half years to upgrade and expand the branch facilities in Bishkek, the capital of **Kyrgyzstan**. The dedication program took place on October 24, 2015, just one month after the project was completed. An audience of more than 3,000 in 18 Kingdom Halls and 5 other venues were thrilled to be tied in to the program. Stephen Lett of the Governing Body gave the dedication talk, which had the motivating theme “Serve Jehovah With a Complete Heart.” The following day a faith-strengthening program was presented to the vast majority of the publishers in the country.



### **Kyrgyzstan branch**

On Saturday, May 14, 2016, an audience of 6,435 was present for the dedication of the **Armenia** branch office, housed in 6 floors of a beautiful 18-story residential building. An Assembly Hall and facilities for the School for Kingdom Evangelizers were also dedicated. The talks during the program outlined the small beginnings of Jehovah's servants in Armenia. The work had its start among Armenian immigrants in the United States in the early part of the 20th century and then in Armenia itself in the mid-1970's, while the country was still part of the Soviet Union. More recently, the organization obtained legal registration and the branch was formed. Many of those present never imagined that they would see such thrilling theocratic accomplishments. The highlight of the event came when all in attendance wholeheartedly agreed with David Splane of the Governing Body to dedicate those beautiful facilities to Jehovah.



## Armenia

Top: Armenia branch dedication program

Center: Brothers and sisters attending the special weekend program

Bottom: Traditional Armenian dance during the evening



# Legal Report

In legal battles and through challenging circumstances, our Christian brothers and sisters give proof of their loyalty to Jehovah God. Their example encourages all of us to stand firm in our faith, confident that “Jehovah will treat his loyal one in a special way.”—Ps. 4:3.

## **ARGENTINA | Right to Educate Children on Religious Matters**

Ruth grew up in a Christian household but became inactive at a young age. Later, she began a relationship with a man and in time gave birth to a baby girl. One day, in the city of La Plata, Ruth noticed Jehovah’s Witnesses using a literature display table and recalled her Christian heritage. She was moved to renew her association with the congregation and began to teach the Bible to her young daughter. The girl’s father opposed Ruth’s religious activity and filed an action in family court to prevent Ruth from teaching the Bible to their daughter or taking her to congregation meetings.

Ruth’s attorney argued that both parents have the right to share religious beliefs with their child and that the court could not interfere with that right unless there was proof that the child was harmed by the religious instruction. The court ruled that the parents should respect their daughter’s right to practice a religion freely, although she was only four years old at the time! The court of appeal clarified that the child was too young to make her own decisions on religious education and that both parents have an **equal right to educate her on religious matters.**

Ruth’s young daughter reads her Bible each night and now attends the meetings with her mother. She is eagerly looking forward to visiting Bethel in Buenos Aires.

**Azerbaijan:** Valida Jabrayilova and Irina Zakharchenko



## **AZERBAIJAN | Right to Manifest Religious Belief**

The apostle Paul observed that in the true Christian congregation, “if one member suffers, all the other members suffer with it.” (1 Cor. 12:26) This was proved true, as Jehovah’s Witnesses worldwide felt deeply for the suffering of Sisters Irina Zakharchenko and Valida Jabrayilova in Azerbaijan. In February 2015, authorities charged these two sisters with illegal religious activity. The judge placed them in pretrial detention, and because of a series of postponements, the sisters spent almost a year in prison, where they endured abusive treatment and deprivation.

When their case finally came to trial in January 2016, the judge found the sisters guilty and fined them, but he canceled the fines on account of the pretrial detention and allowed them to return home. When the Baku Court of Appeal dismissed their pleas against the criminal convictions, they appealed to the Supreme Court. In addition, they filed complaints with the UN Human Rights Committee over the ill-treatment and the violation of their **right to manifest religious belief**.

In the meantime, the sisters are recovering from their ordeal. They have expressed deep appreciation for the many prayers and expressions of concern in their behalf.

Sister Jabrayilova wrote to the Governing Body: “Your prayers helped us endure the hardship, and I really felt it. I will never forget the love and care shown by you, by Jehovah, and by my brothers and sisters around the world.”

### **ERITREA | Imprisoned for Their Faith**

As of July 2016, the government of Eritrea has imprisoned 55 of Jehovah’s Witnesses **for their faith**. Three brothers—Paulos Eyassu, Isaac Mogos, and Negede Teklemariam—have been in prison since September 1994, and the government has held another nine brothers for at least ten years.

A positive development occurred in January 2016 when a court brought to trial the Witnesses arrested at the Memorial in Asmara in April 2014. This was the first time that authorities formally charged Witnesses with a “crime” and gave them an opportunity to make a defense. As expected, most of the brothers and sisters on trial were found guilty of attending an “illegal” meeting, fined, and then released. However, Saron Gebru, one of the accused sisters, refused to accept the fine. For this, she was sentenced to six months in prison. Sister Gebru was able to receive visitors once a week and reported that she was treated well. She and the other 54 Witnesses in prison appreciate the many prayers said in their behalf as we all “keep in mind those in prison, as though [we] were imprisoned with them.”—Heb. 13:3.

### **GERMANY | Freedom of Religion—Legal Recognition**

On December 21, 2015, the state of Bremen, in northwest Germany, finally granted the Religious Association of Jehovah’s Witnesses in Germany a higher level of **legal status** than previously enjoyed. This action concluded a four-year legal effort in German courts. Following a decision by the Higher Administrative Court in Berlin, the majority of the

16 states in Germany granted Jehovah's Witnesses a preferred legal status, called public law status. However, Bremen authorities decided against granting this status to the Witnesses, primarily because of false accusations spread by opposers.

In 2015, Germany's Federal Constitutional Court concluded that Bremen's refusal to grant public law status violated the constitutional rights of the Witnesses. The decision confirms that the constitutional guarantees of religious freedom protect the religious activity of Jehovah's Witnesses in Bremen. The congregations there are entitled to tax exemption and other privileges enjoyed by the major religious denominations in Germany.

### **KYRGYZSTAN | Right to Manifest Religious Belief**

In March 2013, authorities in Osh, Kyrgyzstan, fabricated criminal charges against Oksana Koriakina and her mother, Nadezhda Sergienko. The prosecutor accused the Witnesses of defrauding people while they were **sharing Bible teachings** with their neighbors, and the judge sentenced them to house arrest while the case was pending trial. In October 2014, the trial court found that the evidence was contrived, procedures were violated, and the sisters were not guilty. The appeal court upheld that decision in October 2015.

However, the Osh city prosecutor appealed again, this time to the Supreme Court of Kyrgyzstan. That Court canceled the sisters' acquittal and ordered a new trial. At the hearing in April 2016, the lawyers representing the sisters motioned for dismissal because the statute of limitations had expired. The judge had no choice but to terminate the case, bringing the criminal proceedings to an end.

Throughout their ordeal, the sisters maintained a positive outlook. Sister Sergienko said, "People often become bitter if

others treat them badly, but I felt Jehovah’s love and care through the brothers and sisters—we were never alone.” The sisters saw firsthand that Jehovah continues to make good on his promise recorded at Isaiah 41:10: “Do not be afraid . . . I will really hold on to you with my right hand of righteousness.”

## **KYRGYZSTAN | Freedom of Religion—Legal Recognition**

On August 9, 2015, ten police officers burst into a congregation meeting in the city of Osh, Kyrgyzstan. They demanded that the “illegal” meeting stop immediately and even threatened to shoot the more than 40 in attendance. The police brought ten brothers to the police station, where officers subjected nine of them to abuse and beatings and then released them. Two days later, police arrested Nurlan Usupbaev, one of the brothers who had been brutally beaten, and charged him with illegal religious activity for conducting the meeting.

When the case against Brother Usupbaev came before the Osh City Court, the judge found no evidence of the charges against him and dismissed the case. The prosecutor appealed to the Osh Regional Court, which dismissed the appeal, confirming that Brother Usupbaev could not be guilty of illegal religious activity because Jehovah’s Witnesses are **legally registered** in Kyrgyzstan.

Not giving up, the prosecutor then appealed to the Kyrgyzstan Supreme Court. To Brother Usupbaev’s relief, the Supreme Court terminated the case in March 2016, leaving in place the positive decisions of the trial and appeal courts and again confirming that Jehovah’s Witnesses have the right to hold religious meetings in Kyrgyzstan. A separate case brought by the victims against the Osh police officers is still pending in the courts.

# RUSSIA'S ATTACK ON RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

## SINCE 2010:



**88 PUBLICATIONS  
BANNED**



**OFFICIAL WEBSITE  
BANNED**



- RELIGIOUS BUILDINGS AND PROPERTY CONFISCATED
- ALL RELIGIOUS LITERATURE DENIED ENTRY (IMPOUNDED)
- HUNDREDS OF DETAINMENTS/ARRESTS

## IN THE FIRST EIGHT MONTHS OF 2016:



**AUTHORITIES  
THREATEN TO CLOSE  
NATIONAL OFFICE**

**16** CRIMINAL  
CONVICTIONS

**34** HOMES AND RELIGIOUS  
BUILDINGS SEARCHED

**30** RAIDS

**64** DETENTIONS/  
ARRESTS



## RUSSIA | Freedom of Religion

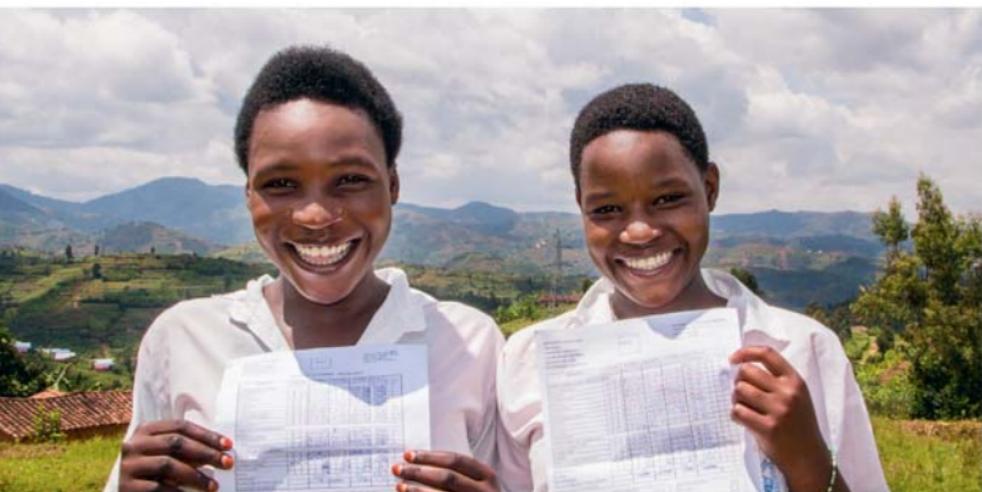
Despite strong objections from Russian human rights authorities, the Russian government continues its relentless attack against Jehovah's Witnesses and their religious activity. At last count, authorities have declared 88 of our publications to be "extremist" and have banned the official website of Jehovah's Witnesses, [jw.org](http://jw.org). In 2015, customs officials denied the importation of the *New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures*, and a court in Vyborg is considering whether to declare this modern Bible translation to be "extremist." In March 2016, the Prosecutor General's Office took bold steps,

threatening to close down the central offices of Jehovah's Witnesses in Solnechnoye, outside St. Petersburg, for alleged "extremist activity."

Despite the aggressive state-sponsored campaign against Jehovah's Witnesses, there has been some good news. In October 2015, a prosecutor filed a claim to liquidate the Local Religious Organization (LRO) in Tyumen, located some 1,300 miles east of Moscow. Despite proof that police had fabricated evidence against the Witnesses, the Tyumen Regional Court found the Tyumen LRO guilty. However, on April 15, 2016, the Supreme Court of the Russian Federation reversed the lower court's decision, ruling that "there were **no grounds to liquidate** the LRO of Jehovah's Witnesses in the City of Tyumen." When the presiding judge read the verdict, the 60 brothers and sisters who had packed the courtroom erupted in a standing ovation.

Jehovah's people in Russia are determined to continue worshipping him despite any "weapon formed against [them]."—Isa. 54:17.

**Rwanda:** They returned to school



## **RWANDA | Right to Education Free From Religious Discrimination**

In recent years, Witness schoolchildren in Rwanda have faced expulsion because of their refusal to support religious or patriotic activities in schools. Seeking to remedy this problem, on December 14, 2015, the government issued an order intended to eliminate **religious discrimination** in schools. The order calls upon schools to respect the freedom of worship of students.

On June 9, 2016, the jw.org Newsroom published an article entitled “Rwanda Acts to Counter Religious Discrimination in Schools.” Interestingly, a popular online newspaper in Rwanda reposted the article. The newspaper’s website soon had over 3,000 hits, and many readers posted positive comments about the government’s action. Witnesses in Rwanda are grateful for the order that assures that their children can receive an **education free from religious discrimination**.

## **SOUTH KOREA | Freedom of Conscience—Conscientious Objection to Military Service**

For over 60 years, male Witnesses in South Korea between 19 and 35 years of age have faced the issue of military service. The government of South Korea does not recognize the right to **conscientious objection** and offers no alternative to military service. In some cases, successive generations of Witnesses—grandfather, father, and son—have had no choice but to go to prison when called up for military service.

The Constitutional Court has twice ruled that the Military Service Law is constitutional, but lower courts and men punished by that law have again put the issue before the Constitutional Court. Consequently, on July 9, 2015, the Court heard arguments on behalf of conscientious objectors. Brother Min-hwan Kim, who spent 18 months in prison because his conscience would not permit him to accept military

**Germany:** Public witnessing  
with a cart in front of a refugee camp

training, explains: “I have been punished and released from prison. But I hope that many other conscientious objectors will not be punished. If they are allowed to perform alternative service, they will be able to contribute to the community.” The Constitutional Court will soon announce its decision.

### **TURKMENISTAN | Bahram Hemdemov**

Brother Hemdemov, 53 years old, is married and the father of four sons. He is a zealous spiritual man who is a well-respected member of the community. In May 2015, a court sentenced him to four years of hard labor in prison for holding an “illegal” religious meeting in his home. He is detained in a notoriously wretched labor camp in the town of Seydi, where he has suffered repeated interrogations and brutal beatings at the hands of the authorities. However, he has maintained his integrity to Jehovah God, as has his family. Brother Hemdemov’s wife, Gulzira, has been able to visit him periodically to provide encouragement.

As we see Jehovah’s people continue to prove their loyalty under test, we pray in their behalf. Their example also motivates us to strengthen our own bonds of loyalty to God, confident of the promise of Psalm 37:28: “He will not abandon his loyal ones.”



## DISPATCHES

### News From Around the World

#### **Reaching the Refugees and Migrants**

The foreign-language field in **Germany** has grown as a result of the large number of refugees and migrants who have entered the country. In a recent nine-month period, 229 foreign-language groups and pregroups were started. About 800 publishers are attending some 30 language courses in 13 languages.

Our brothers are preaching to refugees at reception centers. Using witnessing carts at over 200 locations, the brothers have placed about 640,000 pieces of literature.

The Governing Body approved a special preaching campaign from May to July 2016. Some 700 Arabic-speaking publishers from seven countries traveled to ten locations in Austria and Germany to preach to large groups of Arabic-speaking people living there.

### **Coins on the Road**

The 50 publishers in the Faber's Road Kriol Congregation in **Belize** usually witness in their territory on foot. Most of the brothers have little financially, but they look for opportunities to show a generous spirit. A couple of years ago, the brothers began picking up coins they found on the dusty roads while preaching from house to house. At the end of each year since then, they have gotten together to wash, sort, and count the coins they have collected.

Although most of the coins have been of little value (half a cent U.S.), each year they collect the equivalent of \$225 (U.S.) in coins. The brothers use half the funds to help pay for local Kingdom Hall expenses, and the other half, they send to support the worldwide work.

### **A Listening Audience of Four Million!**

One of the most noteworthy events in the theocratic history of **Burundi** occurred on March 5, 2016, during the branch visit conducted by Anthony Griffin, a headquarters representative. An entire special program for the congregations was broadcast countrywide on the main national radio station. The listening audience was estimated at some four million people!

The radio broadcast gave a great witness, and many favorable comments were heard. One of the radio tech-

nicians who assisted in the broadcast said, “You have to do more of these programs!” And a radio official wrote: “I encourage you to continue [producing similar programs], which will no doubt save many souls.” Numerous buses and taxis were playing the program on their radios.

### **The Music Stopped**

On the day before the Memorial in 2016, the brothers in a small isolated group in **Nepal** were distressed to learn that there was going to be a big music concert at the school next to the hall they had rented.

Such concerts are very loud. As the brothers were cleaning the hall the morning of the Memorial, an organizer of the concert told them, “You won’t hear a thing except our music.”

The concert started at noon, and it was as loud as expected. Though the brothers rented a loudspeaker much larger than the one they originally planned to use, they could not even hear the microphone test. The brothers were devastated but prayed earnestly about the matter. Then, 30 minutes before the Memorial, when many of the brothers were arriving, the music suddenly stopped. A fight had broken out among some people at the concert who had been drinking, and the police had shut down the event. The brothers were able to observe the Memorial in a very quiet, peaceful, and respectful atmosphere.

### **Praise for jw.org**

Giuseppe is a regular pioneer in **Italy**. He works from his home for an Internet consulting firm. Last May he

attended a meeting with about 70 colleagues to discuss new ideas that could be implemented by the company. The company's chief executive officer (CEO) began by saying that some websites could be taken as practical models of what their company was aspiring to. He then showed an example on a display screen. Giuseppe was astonished to see the home page of [jw.org](http://jw.org) appear on the screen. The CEO said, "This is the best website in the world!" Then he started analyzing technical aspects of [jw.org](http://jw.org). He spoke positively about the easy-to-find links and the captivating graphics.

"My colleagues were amazed to learn how many languages the website supports," said Giuseppe. "At the end of the presentation, my supervisor told the audi-

**Argentina:** Jorge playing soccer with the brothers



ence and the CEO: ‘Giuseppe is one of Jehovah’s Witnesses.’ At that, the CEO told me: ‘Your organization is to be praised. You have designed a Web portal that any company, firm, or organization in the world would envy. I can only imagine the effort it takes to keep it updated and user-friendly and the amount of attention that must be given to details and content.’ I was a bit embarrassed to receive so much praise for something that I had not done. But I was overjoyed that a witness was given to many who knew nothing about Jehovah’s Witnesses. Now I have regular conversations with some colleagues and have even started a Bible study with three of them.” The company Giuseppe works for continues to “study” the jw.org website, while Giuseppe continues to discuss the Bible with his colleagues.

### **He Said No to Soccer**

Jorge is a youth who lives in **Argentina**. At the beginning of 2010, Jorge first learned of the good news through a classmate. Subsequently, he began to study the Bible using the book *What Does the Bible Really Teach?* During this time, he played soccer. He excelled at the sport and qualified for a place in the lower division of a major soccer club. In April 2014, he received the tempting offer to play on a team in Germany. He was excited at the thought of becoming a professional soccer player, and he accepted the offer. A few days before Jorge was to leave for Europe, his coach said to him: “You are one of Jehovah’s Witnesses, aren’t you? Don’t ruin your life going abroad. When I was young, I was

also a Witness. I was invited to join a team in an Asian country. They promised me many things, and I was fascinated by it all. I traveled there with my family, but we came back very disappointed.” Jorge says: “His comment made quite an impact on me, and I decided not to go to Europe. In 2015, I became a publisher of the good news and was baptized.”

### **A Real Blessing Free of Charge**

In September 2015, the “Imitate Jesus!” Regional Convention was held in Kampala, **Uganda**. To the excitement of those in attendance, Mark Sanderson of the Governing Body released the *New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures* in Luganda.

One Bible student commented: “Receiving this beautiful Bible gave me so much joy! At the time, people were preparing for the pope’s visit. To raise funds, ‘blessed’ rosaries were sold for \$30 (U.S.). People wanted the blessings, but many did not have the money. On the other hand, I got a real blessing free of charge. Jehovah gave it to all who came to the convention, and it was left to each one to offer a voluntary donation from the heart. Every day, when I read Jehovah’s Word in my mother tongue and get to know him better, I feel truly blessed. I thank Jehovah for giving me my copy of the Bible.”

### **Printing in the Spirit Realm?**

In an attempt to discredit [www.jw.org](http://www.jw.org), leaders of some churches in a region of **Congo (Kinshasa)** taught their followers that publications of Jehovah’s Witness-

es are printed in the spirit world. In an effort to support this claim, they pointed to the letters “www,” saying that they correspond to the number 666 in the book of Revelation. (Rev. 13:18) Because of this, some Bible students refused to have a study.

After praying about the matter, a pioneer couple invited their Bible students and their mates to their home. Three couples responded, and after a meal, the Witness couple showed them the video *Jehovah’s Witnesses—Organized to Share the Good News*. What their guests learned completely dispelled the false ideas they had heard concerning the origin of our publications. The following week, the husband of one of those students insisted that the Witness couple accept and forward his contribution of \$100 (U.S.) for the worldwide work, although he himself was not yet studying.

### **Learning the New Songs**

Though the brothers in a remote area of **Papua New Guinea** have no Internet access, they earnestly want to learn the latest Kingdom songs. So the Mundip Congregation sends a brother to the nearest town, which requires a two-hour walk plus a two-hour bus ride. Once there, he accesses the Internet, writes the new song lyrics in a notebook, and travels back home, where he writes the lyrics on a blackboard at the Kingdom Hall for everyone to see. The rest of the congregation then copy the new songs for the meetings. They truly appreciate singing along with congregations worldwide as part of their worship of Jehovah.



## Worldwide

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LANDS

**240**

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PEAK PUBLISHERS

**8,340,847**

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TOTAL HOURS SPENT  
IN THE FIELD MINISTRY

**1,983,763,754**

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BIBLE STUDIES

**10,115,264**

# Preaching and Teaching Earth Wide

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**Switzerland**





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LANDS

58

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POPULATION

1,109,511,431

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PUBLISHERS

1,538,897

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BIBLE STUDIES

4,089,110

## Africa

### **She Prayed to Find the Deaf**

In Sierra Leone, Crystal, a missionary serving in the sign-language field, began her day by praying to find deaf ones in the territory. That morning, as she was looking for a return visit, she went down a different road from usual. She asked neighbors if they knew of any deaf people in the area, and they directed her to a house. There she met

a friendly young woman who responded well to the message and showed interest in attending the sign-language meeting. Then people in the compound asked if Crystal would like to meet another deaf person. So she found yet another humble person looking for the truth. Though she had worked that street more than once, she had never encountered the two deaf people she met that morning. Crystal is convinced that she never would have found those interested ones without the help of Jehovah.

### **“That Talk Was Meant for Me!”**

Emmanuel, who lives in **Liberia**, was driving to the Kingdom Hall for his weekend meeting. Standing beside the road was a smartly dressed young man who looked very distressed. Moved by his appearance, Emmanuel stopped the car to see if he could help. He learned that the man’s name was Moses. The previous night, all his money had been stolen, and he was now contemplating suicide. Emmanuel listened to what Moses had to say and then compassionately said to him, “Please come with me to the Kingdom Hall.” The two went to the hall together. What Moses heard there moved him to tears. After listening to the public discourse, Moses exclaimed: “That talk was meant for me!”

Jehovah's Witnesses are unique." At the end of the meeting, Moses accepted a Bible study and now regularly attends the congregation meetings.

### **"I Am Not a Pagan"**

Aminata is a 15-year-old student in **Guinea-Bissau**. When she was 13, her art teacher asked the class to draw masks and other items related to carnival celebrations. Instead, Aminata drew a scene with animals and plants and then wrote "Paradise" on her drawing. When the teacher collected the drawings, he told Aminata that her drawing was off topic and gave her a mark of zero. After class, Aminata went to see the teacher and asked, "Who is carnival for?"

"Pagans," answered the teacher.

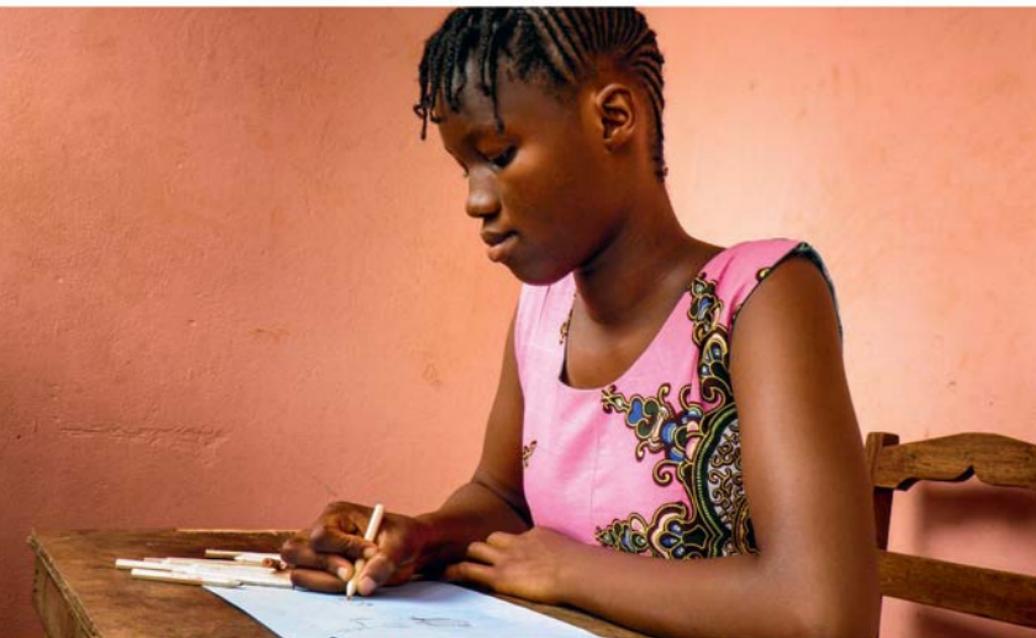
Aminata replied: "I am not a pagan, so I don't participate in these kinds of festivals. I believe that God will soon transform the earth into a paradise, and that is what I drew." The teacher said that he would redo the test using written questions. The result? She scored 18 out of 20.

### **So Many Came**

The isolated group at a small village in **Malawi** has seven publishers. They meet under a structure made of poles, grass, and reed mats. Stirred by the circuit overseer's visit, the brothers showed great zeal in inviting people to attend the Memorial of Christ's death. The

**Guinea-Bissau:** Aminata draws "Paradise" ▲

**Malawi:** The attendance was 120 ►



speaker delivered the Memorial discourse in the light of oil lamps suspended from above. But he could hardly move because there were so many interested ones around him. Imagine the joy of the 7 publishers when they learned that the attendance was 120!

### **The Brochure Helped Her Marriage**

Special public metropolitan witnessing often results in blessings not immediately evident. In Lomé, the capital of **Togo**, a woman hesitantly approached a literature stand and took the brochure *Your Family Can Be Happy*. A brief discussion of Ephesians 5:3 followed. The woman and the Witnesses exchanged telephone numbers. Two weeks later, the woman phoned and said: “I really did not like Jehovah’s Witnesses. Still, I read the brochure, and it is super. It has already helped me to solve some of my marital problems, and I have also helped two other couples. My view of Jehovah’s Witnesses was wrong. Please come and study the Bible with me.” A study was started with this woman as well as with one of the couples whom she had helped.

### **He Translated the Brochure**

Ankasie is a small town in **Ghana**. A few traders display their wares along the main street. Every Monday, though, a cart for public witnessing is set up. After being given a witness by a brother named Samuel, Enoch accepted the brochure *Listen to God* and asked Samuel if he had any literature in the Kusaal language.

Samuel replied: “Sorry, we don’t. But we have brochures in Frafra,” a related language. Later, before

Enoch traveled to his home in the far north, he asked for literature to distribute to his relatives.

Upon his return to Ankasie, he presented Samuel with a document. Enoch had translated the *Listen to God* brochure into Kusaal! He continues to attend meetings and studies the Bible regularly.



**Ghana:** He translated the brochure into Kusaal





## The Americas

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LANDS

57

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POPULATION

998,254,087

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PUBLISHERS

4,154,608

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BIBLE STUDIES

4,353,152

### **“I Will Learn With You”**

Ismael, who lives in **Mexico**, decided to read the entire Bible. Within a year, he had read it twice, but later he lost his sight. After some years, Ángel, one of Jehovah’s Witnesses, met Ismael and talked to him about God’s promises. Ismael was eager to learn more, but he said, “I am blind; I cannot read the Bible.”

**Mexico:** They learned Braille together

Ángel reassured him, “Don’t worry, I will teach you Braille.”

“Do you know Braille?” asked Ismael.

“No, but I will learn with you,” replied Ángel. Ismael could not believe that Ángel would do that for him. But Ángel went home, did research on how to read Braille, and prepared tactile letters on a piece of cardboard. Next he started teaching Ismael how to read Braille. Soon, Ismael had learned the Braille alphabet, was attending meetings, and was reading our Braille publications. Now Ángel has four Bible students who are blind. They love to talk about the future Paradise when they will again be able to see.

### **She Did Not Recognize Him**

Viannei, a 14-year-old sister in the **United States**, writes: “In social studies class, my substitute teacher started talking about religions. He asked us to name some, so I mentioned Jehovah’s Witnesses. My classmates laughed, saying that we waste their time, that we have nothing better to do, and that they throw away our literature. Even the teacher was talking badly about us.

“So I said a prayer to Jehovah to give me strength to give a witness. I told them that we go to their houses, not because we want to waste their time, but because



Jehovah sends us to give them good advice based on the Bible. I asked them not to throw away the literature; it could change their lives and save them. My teacher apologized, promising that the next time a Witness called, he would open the door, listen, and read our literature. I didn't believe he meant what he said.

“I saw him four months later, and to my surprise, he was studying. After another six months, he looked



**Brazil:** Preaching  
in the Amazon

for me at school to thank me for preaching to him. I didn't even recognize him because he had cut his hair and shaved off his beard. He is now an unbaptized publisher."

### **Witnessing in the Amazon**

Last year, the vast Amazon region was in the spotlight for Jehovah's people in **Brazil**. Many in that region have never had the opportunity to hear the good news.

With that in mind, the Governing Body approved a special year-long preaching campaign to reach the thousands of people who live in some of the Amazon's most isolated areas.

The branch office selected 53 towns scattered along the Amazon's great network of waterways to receive Kingdom preachers during that time. In just four months, more than 6,500 publishers responded to the call.

In the remote town of Anamá, where there were no Kingdom publishers, ten brothers and sisters stayed for 11 days, placing well over 12,500 pieces of literature and starting some 200 Bible studies, which are now being conducted by phone. While there, the brothers also held meetings. At the final meeting held before leaving, they were thrilled to see 90 in attendance. The full impact of the campaign is yet to be seen.

### **Recommending [jw.org](http://jw.org)**

For the past six years, Jehizel and Mariana have been in the same class at school in **Venezuela**. Because of being one of Jehovah's Witnesses, Jehizel was often the target of Mariana's ridicule. Mariana was convinced that Jehizel didn't know how to enjoy life. One day, after receiving more negative comments, it occurred to our sister to say: "Mariana, look up our website, [jw.org](http://jw.org). Then go to 'Find Videos,' and click the box 'Teenagers.' "

That afternoon Mariana called Jehizel. "I now know why you do all this," she said.

Uncertain of what she meant, Jehizel asked, “Are you making fun of me again?”

“No, I won’t make fun of you ever again,” Mariana said. “Thanks to you, I now realize that what I thought was ‘enjoying life’ has really been the cause of many of my problems.” Arrangements were made for Mariana to study the Bible regularly, and she is now attending all the meetings.

### **Questions for the Pastor**

Gérole, who worked as a secretary for her church in **Haiti**, was impressed that the Witnesses were able to answer all her questions from the Bible. She and her

**Haiti:** Gérole and her daughter have many Bible studies



daughter accepted a Bible study. Touched by what they were learning, they asked for their study to be conducted twice a week.

After three months of studying, Gérole approached the pastor of her church and asked four questions: “In what year was Jesus enthroned as King? Where will good people go when they die? Where will the wicked go when they die? On what did Jesus die, a cross or stake?” The pastor said that he could only answer questions two and three. “Jehovah’s Witnesses say it’s 144,000 that will go to heaven,” he said. “But I say all who do the will of God will go to heaven. As for the wicked, they will burn forever in hell.” When asked for Scriptural references, he was unable to provide any. Gérole was disappointed but was now more determined than ever to continue with her Bible study. She resigned from her church and said that she had learned more about the Bible in three months of studying with Jehovah’s Witnesses than she had by attending church for more than 30 years. Gérole and her daughter were baptized recently, and they have started 23 Bible studies in their village.



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LANDS

**49**

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POPULATION

**4,464,374,770**

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PUBLISHERS

**728,989**

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BIBLE STUDIES

**771,272**

## Asia and the Middle East

### **From One Contact, Many Responded**

In the **Philippines**, Jonathan was waiting for an appointment with a doctor. Noting his smart, well-groomed appearance, a woman at the reception desk asked if he was an insurance agent. Jonathan explained that he was one of Jehovah's Witnesses and that he was there to assist a Witness patient who

had some medical needs. Impressed, the receptionist, Laila, told Jonathan that her father, who had recently died, was a regular reader of *The Watchtower*. Jonathan shared John 5:28, 29 with her and gave her a copy of the tract *What Hope for Dead Loved Ones?*

On subsequent visits to the hospital, he brought Laila more publications and referred her to a sister, who started a Bible study with her. Soon Laila's husband, sis-



**Philippines:** Jonathan witnessed to the receptionist

ter, and mother, all of whom lived with her, joined in the study.

Rose, Laila's neighbor, approached Laila and asked why she had so many visitors to her apartment. Laila explained that she was studying the Bible with Jehovah's Witnesses. As a result, Rose started to study too, and when she went to visit her sister in her home province, she excitedly told her sister about what she was learning. Her sister, Abigail, was curious about the things she heard, so she asked for a Bible study. Rose's mother also accepted a Bible study.

Laila was baptized at a recent regional convention. Her mother is also now baptized. Her neighbor, Rose, and Rose's sister were baptized last year. Rose's mother now attends the meetings regularly. And some of Laila's family members continue to study the Bible. All of this came from one contact in a hospital!

### **Using Technology to Reach the Deaf**

The sign-language field in **Sri Lanka** is now experiencing growth. In 2015, the Witnesses had fewer than 80 addresses of deaf people, and these were recorded on bits of paper. Since then, the first Sri Lankan Sign Language congregation has been formed and a computer database has been set up containing about 420 names as well as addresses with GPS coordinates. The brothers have contacted about 80 percent of those people either in person or via video chat or text messaging. A missionary couple report: "Now we can give our deaf publishers a territory to work. Before that, they would visit only the deaf they personally knew."

## **Thanks From a Government Official**

The brothers in **Mongolia** actively participate in special metropolitan public witnessing even when temperatures dip to 20 degrees below zero Fahrenheit. One government official picked up publications from the cart and then wrote a thank-you note. It read: "I am a Buddhist. But I have looked into many other fields, for I stick to the principle that we should not follow just one road but explore others. After reading some of the publications that you have provided for mankind, I have decided to write a letter to express my feelings. I can clearly see that you have invested a lot of time and energy to provide information that is practical and helpful. One thing I learned from your publications is that the Bible is a book one must read. This book has the truth. The Bible provides true guidance for our lives. I wish to thank all those who put great effort into translating the literature into Mongolian. Also, I would like to thank all those who hand out literature to help people whether it is extremely hot or cold outside."

## **His Prayer Was Heard**

In **Hong Kong**, a pioneer brother named Brett approached a young man in his late 20's and offered him the tract *What Is the Key to Happy Family Life?* Upon seeing the tract, the young man was moved to tears. He explained that he had been raised in the truth, but when he was 16 years old, he ran away from home. For the next five years, he lived on the streets and became addicted to drugs until he was found and helped by a charity organization.



**Mongolia:** Public witnessing in cold weather

He went on to say that the morning he met this brother, he had prayed, “If the religion of my youth is correct, please show me a sign today.” He felt that his prayer had been answered. The two went to a nearby coffee shop where they considered material from the brochure *Return to Jehovah*. Because the young man had to return to France that evening, they exchanged contact information. Later, the young man wrote to Brett: “My dear brother, Jehovah has answered my prayers. I will go to the nearest hall on Sunday.” He made contact with Witnesses in France and began to study the Bible and attend meetings.



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LANDS

47

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POPULATION

744,482,011

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PUBLISHERS

1,611,290

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BIBLE STUDIES

834,121

## Europe

### A Mild Reply

In Georgia, a man approached a literature cart, shouting: "I will not let you preach here! Georgia is an Orthodox Christian country." The brother beside the cart kindly asked the man if he had ever read any of our literature. The man answered, "No, not really." The brother tactfully suggested that he do so. That reasonable approach calmed the

## **Azerbaijan**

man, and he took some literature. Days later, the man returned and apologized for his earlier behavior. He said that he had read our magazine to his blind mother. They both liked it very much and wanted something new to read. Now he visits our cart regularly to get the latest magazines.

### **A Better Way to Settle Matters**

While sharing in the ministry in **Azerbaijan**, two of our brothers approached a young man standing in front of a building and began witnessing to him. The man replied, “I cannot listen to these things; it would be a sin.” He then took a knife out of his back pocket and said, “I have been treated unjustly, and I am about to go and use this knife to see that justice is done.”

The brothers were taken aback, but said, “It is a sin to kill.”

The man said, “What should I do?” They read Romans 12:17-21 to him and explained that vengeance belongs to God and that we must not “be conquered by the evil, but keep conquering the evil with the good.” They told him about the power of a mild tongue and said that if he harmed or killed someone, his conscience would torture him. Impressed with what he heard, the man left them.

About an hour later, the man found the brothers and said: “I am just coming back from seeing the person I intended to kill. I caused him no harm but resolved the

issue with him. I am grateful that you saved me from causing trouble.” The Witnesses explained that it was really Jehovah who had helped him.

### **Literature Carts Appeal to an Inactive Sister**

Some years ago, a sister in Norway drifted away from the truth. After literature carts began to be used in public witnessing, though, she often passed one while shopping.

Though she never approached the Witnesses at the carts, she took note of the appealing posters and attractive literature displays. This, as well as the friendly and modest appearance of the Witnesses, awakened a desire in her to return to Jehovah and his people.

She also noticed the logo of our website, [jw.org](http://jw.org), so she decided to visit the site. She was impressed when she saw how easy it was to find the address of the nearest Kingdom Hall and current meeting times. She downloaded some publications and went somewhat anxiously to the hall. She was well-received, and the elders arranged for a sister to conduct a Bible study with her. Soon she made good friends in the congregation and got back into her spiritual routine. Now she regularly participates in the meetings and the field service, happy that she once again enjoys a close relationship with Jehovah.

### **Preaching to Classmates on the School Bus**

On a school bus in Norway, 15-year-old Ronja had a discussion with three boys in her class regarding evolution. The boys did not respect her beliefs at all, and this



**Norway:** Ronja defends her beliefs

made our young sister uncomfortable. Because she felt a little rusty on the subject, she asked her mother to help her find some convincing arguments that there is a Creator.

On the school bus the next day, Ronja used the arguments she had prepared. However, the boys just ridiculed her faith in Jehovah. One of them loudly said: "On this bus nobody believes in Jehovah! I ask for a show of hands. Who believes in evolution, and who believes in Jehovah?" To Ronja's surprise, a younger boy who was sitting nearby raised his hand and said, "I believe in Jehovah!" Two other children added, "So do I!" Ronja's conversation with her classmates had been heard by other pupils, and some of them had been convinced by her arguments!

## **An Illiterate Man Finds a Book**

One afternoon, two Arabic-speaking men from Syria came to the branch office in **Denmark**. They told the sisters at the reception desk that they were looking for Jehovah's Witnesses. When the sisters confirmed that they had come to the right place, the men were thrilled. How did they find the address? They showed the personnel at the local public library a picture they had taken with their phone. The picture was of the publishers' page of the Arabic edition of the book *What Does the Bible Really Teach?* The library personnel were then able to give them the address of the branch office.

The two men struggled to communicate in Danish. So a brother who spoke Arabic was called to the reception area. It became clear that one of the men was very interested in learning more about the Bible. The brother got his contact information and promised to visit him shortly thereafter and bring along another Arabic-speaking brother.

When visiting the man at his home, the brothers learned that he had never received a visit from Jehovah's Witnesses. He told them that he found the book in his mailbox, though the mailbox had no name on it to indicate that it belonged to an Arabic-speaking person. Because he was illiterate, he asked one of his friends to read the book to him, and they finished it in three days. What he heard was enough to convince him that he had found the truth.

Being a refugee far away from his family has been very distressing for him, but he finds comfort in the Bible.

The first time he was visited by the brothers, he asked: “Why have you not come to visit me before? I really needed this.” He continues his study with the brothers and is very enthusiastic about what he is learning.

### **From an Empty Heart to a Joyful One**

Dmitry was working as the manager of a tobacco company in **Ukraine**, but when he became more aware of how damaging smoking was to a person’s health, he quit this well-paying job. Then, within three months, his mother and mother-in-law died. Losing those loved ones was a big shock. He hoped he would receive comfort and answers to his questions from his church, but that did not happen. A friend said to him that being an Orthodox Christian meant having “a cross around your neck and an emptiness in your heart.” That was exactly how Dmitry felt. He realized that he did not know anything about God or the Bible. In despair, he began praying for help. Then he remembered having heard about Jehovah’s Witnesses. He found our website on the Internet and was very impressed with how much information it offers about the Bible. Next, he searched for the nearest Kingdom Hall. When he arrived in the parking lot, an attendant welcomed him and asked how he could be of help. Dmitry said, “I need a Bible study.” He has now been studying for the past six months and regularly attends and participates in meetings.

### **Following Up Interest by Means of Notes**

Paul and Faith, who live in **Britain**, enjoyed a conversation with a woman named Susan and arranged to call



**Britain:** Paul and Faith leave notes

back. When they returned, Susan was not at home. Following the advice about notes in *Our Kingdom Ministry* of November 2014, Paul and Faith left a note to say that they would call again the following day. When they went back, they were surprised to find a note for them attached to Susan's door. She explained that she had to do shopping for her daughter's wedding. Paul and Faith left another note to say that they would call again the following week. This time, Susan was waiting for them, and they started a study in the *Bible Teach* book.

Because her daughter was getting married soon, Susan asked if they could postpone the next visit. When Paul and Faith called again, there was no answer, so they left a note that included their cell-phone number. They were pleased to receive a text message from Susan saying that she was sorry she had missed them; she had

been talking with a neighbor in the garden. Since then, Susan has enjoyed a regular Bible study, and she recently attended her first meeting.

Paul and Faith are enthusiastic about leaving notes to keep in contact. “We have had several other calls who have read the notes we left for them. It’s brilliant!”

### **His Faith Moved His Nurse**

In August 2014, a brother was admitted to a hospital in **Hungary** with a pulmonary embolism. Sadly, he died shortly thereafter. Concerning a nurse, Tünde, who had been particularly helpful, the brother’s wife wrote this:

“In the summer of 2015, I attended the ‘Imitate Jesus!’ Regional Convention with my son. At the end of the third day, as we were in the parking lot preparing to return home, a woman stopped in front of me, dropped her bags, hugged me, and began to cry. This was the very nurse who, almost a year before, had cared for my husband in the intensive care unit. She explained that at the beginning of every shift, each nurse is assigned to care for one patient. She prayed each time that she would be assigned to my husband’s bedside. That is exactly what happened time and time again!

“According to Tünde, my husband’s fine conduct in connection with his faith and the constant expressions of his hope gave her the initial push that she needed to begin a serious Bible study with Jehovah’s Witnesses.

“Tünde, who is now studying the Bible, looks forward to the time when she can welcome back my husband.

She wants to let him know that his conduct and strong faith are what helped her to come to know Jehovah and his wonderful promises.”

### **Witnessing From Vehicle to Vehicle**

Because of protests and blockades, some border checkpoints between Greece and Bulgaria were closed at times, with vehicles waiting in lines dozens of miles long. A nearby congregation in **Bulgaria** took advantage of the situation by offering waiting occupants Bible literature to read. The brothers set off for the border with literature in 12 languages. Many of the truck drivers were exhausted and frustrated, but they wanted to talk. The brothers listened sympathetically, offering hope and encouragement. One driver asked, “Are you Jehovah’s Witnesses?” After receiving an affirmative response, he added, “I knew it, because only Jehovah’s Witnesses would preach like you do.” An Austrian truck driver large-heartedly quipped: “Even here we cannot escape you! Congratulations to you! Please continue to provide people with comfort and hope.” Another said: “I have never had the desire to read your literature. But now I will read it with pleasure.” Tears started to roll down the cheeks of one driver when a brother preached to him. He said that he had been a Witness many years ago. The brothers encouraged him not only to read the literature but also to make contact with a congregation.

**Bulgaria:** Witnessing to truck drivers at the border





## Oceania

### **After Nine Years, Her Teacher Responded**

When Olivia, in **Australia**, was in kindergarten, she invited her teacher to the Memorial. Every year for the next eight years, Olivia continued to invite the teacher to the Memorial. Finally, in 2016 the teacher phoned to say that she would like to attend. She said she felt honored that Olivia had invited

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LANDS

**29**

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POPULATION

**41,051,379**

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PUBLISHERS

**98,574**

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BIBLE STUDIES

**67,609**

her every year. So the teacher came to the Memorial, along with her husband. Because he had worked for the town council, he remembered when the Kingdom Hall in the town was built. He told the brothers that he had been very impressed with how well-organized the Kingdom Hall project had been. Both the teacher and her husband enjoyed the evening so much that they were among the last to leave.

### **He Read the Book Three Times**

Jacintu and his wife live in **Timor-Leste**. Devout Catholics, they were puzzled when their nephew became one of Jehovah's Witnesses and no longer worshipped with the family. Wanting to prove his nephew wrong, Jacintu decided to read the book *What Does the Bible Really Teach?* His aim was to look for false teachings. Later he said to his wife: "I read the book. But it was all good."

"You must not have read it properly," she replied. "Read it again, but this time read it slowly."

Jacintu did so, and again he told his wife: "It's all good." But he added: "It's all from the Bible. Even what it says about worshipping the dead is from the Bible."

She said: "Read it a third time, but this time underline each paragraph—study it properly. It must be wrong."

Jacintu studied the book very carefully, marking each paragraph. After this third careful reading, he said: "It's

all true! Our nephew is right.” Jacintu now studies the Bible with Jehovah’s Witnesses.

### **Her Daughter Spoke Up**

A pioneer sister, a resident of **Guam**, visited a Pohnpeian woman and showed her the video entitled *Why Study the Bible?* The sister said she would call again. Though she returned a few times, she was unable to find the woman at home. So when the woman’s daughter answered the door, the sister decided to show her a video from the series *Become Jehovah’s Friend*. The daughter thoroughly enjoyed it. The next time the sister called, the mother answered the door and responded favorably to the Bible’s message. Apparently, the daughter had told her mother that they should go to the church of the lady that showed her the video. This seemed to spark the mother’s interest. A Bible

**Australia:** After nine years, Olivia’s persistence paid off





**Papua New Guinea:** The people eagerly waited for Terence and Stella

study was demonstrated, and arrangements were made to continue it.

### **“Like Sheep Without a Shepherd”**

Terence, a circuit overseer, traveled with his wife, Stella, to Inakor, an unassigned territory in **Papua New Guinea**. Terence relates: “While we were still sleeping in the early morning of the first day, we heard a knock on the door. Many people were waiting outside, so we preached to them from six o’clock until noon. We stopped to take a shower and then found that many more were waiting for us. So we preached again from two o’clock in the afternoon until midnight.” The next

morning, the couple decided to leave very early to visit another area. Once again many came looking for them at their place of lodging, but they did not find them. “When they discovered where we had gone,” Terence said, “they followed us and found us. Again, we preached until noon. When we got back to our lodging place, another group was waiting for us. Each day similar things happened. The people there were ‘like sheep without a shepherd.’”—Matt. 9:36.

### **Gifts for the Therapist**

Agnès, a pioneer living in **New Caledonia**, had to go to a physiotherapist because of a sore arm. While caring for Agnès, the therapist said that she had seen so many people suffering that she was wondering if God was cruel. Agnès silently thanked Jehovah for allowing her the opportunity to defend him. She then showed the therapist the tract *Will Suffering Ever End?* and read Revelation 21:3, 4 to her.

The therapist said: “I am not sure that the verse you just read is in my Bible; it has only the Gospels.” Then, realizing that Agnès was one of Jehovah’s Witnesses, she said that she had met the Witnesses in her home country, Chile.

Agnès recalled that a branch report about Chile was being aired on JW Broadcasting. So on her next visit, she brought her tablet and showed the therapist the video report. The therapist was deeply moved at seeing Bethel and the Assembly Hall in Chile. Afterward, Agnès said, “This is the second thing I have for you, a



**New Caledonia:** Her physiotherapist was deeply moved

complete Bible, so that you can read Revelation 21:3, 4, the verse I read to you last week!” The therapist enthusiastically stood up from her chair and hugged Agnès saying, “Thank you so much for these two wonderful gifts!”

On the next visit, Agnès brought the book *What Does the Bible Really Teach?* and explained further the cause of suffering on earth. The therapist said that she would be leaving New Caledonia to go to Chile for a vacation and that she would take the book with her so she could read it completely.



# Georgia

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THE spread of the Kingdom message in Georgia is aptly portrayed in Jesus' illustration of the hidden leaven. (Matt. 13:33) As was true of the leaven, spiritual growth was not discernible at first, but soon the Kingdom message spread pervasively and changed the lives of many.

Read the vibrant and motivating story of love, faith, loyalty, initiative, and courage displayed by God's people in Georgia during both "favorable times and difficult times."—2 Tim. 4:2.



# An Overview of Georgia

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**Land** Georgia is known for its majestic mountain ranges and snowcapped peaks, some rising to well over 15,000 feet. Geographically, the country is divided into two main parts—eastern and western Georgia, each one consisting of several regions with their own climate, customs, music, dances, and food.

**People** Most of the 3.7 million inhabitants are ethnic Georgians.

**Religion** The majority of the population profess the Orthodox Christian faith. About 10 percent are Muslims.

**Language** The Georgian language is not related to any of the languages of the neighboring countries. Historical sources indicate that the unique Georgian alphabet was invented before our Common Era.





- ▲ Making traditional bread
- ▶ The grape harvest brings much joy
- ▼ Clay vessels like these are used to ferment wine
- ◀ Upper Svaneti



**Livelihood** Many people earn a living from agriculture. More recently, tourism has become a significant part of the Georgian economy.

**Climate** The eastern part of the country enjoys a moderate climate. The coast of the Black Sea, in western Georgia, has a subtropical climate, where citrus fruits grow abundantly.

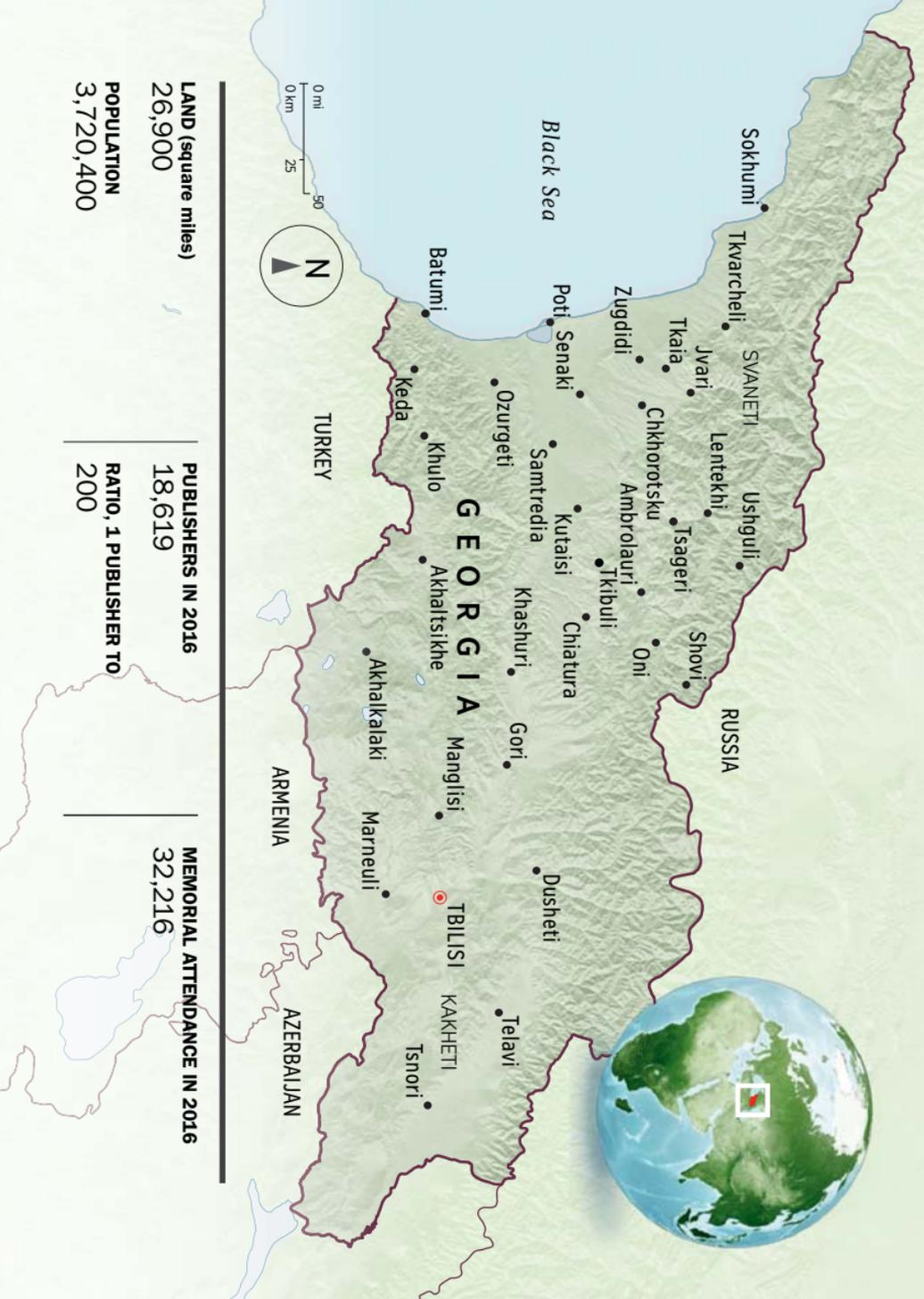
Harvesting grapes in the  
Kakheti region



**Food** Bread accompanies every meal on a Georgian table. Traditional bread is baked in a clay oven. A typical main course is a thick stew with spices and fresh herbs. Wine-making has a long history. Traditionally,

wine is fermented and kept in large clay vessels. Many families grow their own grapes and make their own wine. Georgia is home to some 500 indigenous grape varieties.





**LAND (square miles)**  
26,900

**POPULATION**  
3,720,400

**PUBLISHERS IN 2016**  
18,619

**RATIO, 1 PUBLISHER TO**  
200

**MEMORIAL ATTENDANCE IN 2016**  
32,216

TURKEY

ARMENIA

AZERBAIJAN

# GEORGIA

Sokhumi

Tkarcheli

Jvari

Tkaia

Zugdidi

Black Sea

Poti

Samtredia

Batumi

Keda

Khulo

Ozurgeti

Kutaisi

Khashuri

Gori

Akhaltsikhe

Akhalkalaki

Marneuli

RUSSIA

Ushguli

Lentekhi

Tsageri

Chkhorotsku

Ambrolauri

Chiatura

Oni

Shovi

Manglisi

TBILISI

KAKHETI

Tsnori

Dusheti

Telavi



Meeting on the shore near Sokhumi, 1989



**1924-1990**

## Early Truth-Seekers



◀ Vaso Kveniashvili in 1964, soon after his release from prison

▶ A meeting in the forest

AS EARLY as the 1920's, the Bible Students were putting forth efforts to reach sincere truth-seekers in Georgia. In 1924, an office was opened in Beirut, Lebanon, to direct the preaching work in the area that included Armenia, Georgia, Syria, and Turkey.

Although some seeds of truth may have been sown in Georgia during that time, they did not initially produce visible results. (Matt. 13:33) Over time, however, the Kingdom message spread and caused outstanding changes in the lives of many people in Georgia.

### **He Longed for Justice**

When the second world war broke out, Vaso Kveniashvili was a teenager. Because Georgia was part of



the Soviet Union, his father was soon drafted into the Soviet army. By that time, Vaso's mother had died. Vaso, who was the oldest child, resorted to stealing in order to support himself and his younger siblings.

Vaso joined a gang and eventually became deeply involved in organized crime. He relates, "I felt there was more justice in the criminal world than in the government or society." But Vaso soon realized that he was searching for something beyond what human society can offer. He recalls, "I longed for something that was just."

Vaso was eventually arrested for his criminal activities and exiled to a labor camp in Siberia. There he met

one of Jehovah's Witnesses who had been imprisoned for his faith. "Finally, I found what I was looking for," Vaso recalls. "We did not have any literature, but I did my best to learn from what the brother was telling me."

When Vaso was released in 1964, he returned to Georgia and searched for Jehovah's Witnesses. In the meantime, he kept in touch with his former fellow prisoner by letter. Sadly, his faithful friend passed away, and Vaso lost all contact with God's people. He had to wait almost two decades before he would find the Witnesses again. More about him later.

### **Hardships That Turned Into a Blessing**

For Valentina Miminoshvili, a young Georgian woman, imprisonment in a Nazi concentration camp resulted in a great blessing. There she met Jehovah's Witnesses for the first time. What impressed her the most was

The Gudadze family in the 1960's



their unshakable faith. Her heart was deeply touched by what they taught her from the Bible.

When she returned home after the war, Valentina began sharing her newfound faith with others. But her activity soon attracted the attention of the local authorities, who sentenced her to ten years in a labor camp in Russia. There she met Jehovah's Witnesses again, and later she was baptized.

After her release from the camp in 1967, Valentina moved to western Georgia, where she discreetly resumed her preaching activity. She did not realize that she would soon become the answer to a heartfelt prayer.

### **Jehovah Answered Her Prayers**

In 1962, Sister Antonina Gudadze moved from Siberia to Georgia when her unbelieving husband decided to return to his home country. Originally from Siberia, Antonina had come into contact with the truth through Witnesses who were exiled there. Now, living in Khashuri, a city located in eastern Georgia, she found herself separated from her fellow believers.

Antonina recalls how Jehovah answered her prayers: "One day I received a package from my mother in Siberia, and I found some Bible literature artfully hidden inside. I continued to receive spiritual food in that way for the next six years. Each time, I thanked Jehovah for his spiritual guidance, encouragement, and care."

However, Antonina was alone. She says: "I kept asking Jehovah to reunite me with my brothers and sisters. One day, two women entered the store where I was



Lyuba and Vladimir  
Gladyuk

working as a salesclerk. They asked me, ‘Are you Antonina?’ The kind expression on their faces told me that they were my spiritual sisters. We embraced each other and burst into tears.”

Valentina Miminoshvili was one of the sisters. How excited Antonina was to find out that meetings were being held in western Georgia! She traveled to the meetings once a month, even though they were held over 200 miles from her home.

### **The Truth Takes Root in Western Georgia**

In the 1960’s, some Witnesses who were persecuted by the authorities in other parts of the Soviet Union sought to move to places where conditions were more favorable. Vladimir Gladyuk, a zealous and energetic brother, was one of them. In 1969, he moved from Ukraine to the city of Zugdidi, in western Georgia.

At first, those who came to Georgia conducted meetings in Russian. However, as more and more Geor-

gians began attending the meetings regularly, arrangements were made to hold the meetings in Georgian. The disciple-making work was so successful that in August 1970, 12 local people were baptized.

In the spring of 1972, Vladimir and his family moved farther west, to the city of Sokhumi on the coast of the Black Sea. Vladimir explains: “We felt spiritually rich and were grateful to Jehovah for giving us his blessing. The congregation there grew very quickly.” That spring, the first Memorial was held in Sokhumi, and 45 persons attended.

### **“I Listened With My Whole Heart and Soul”**

Babutsa Jejelava, now in her 90’s, was one of the first people who quickly accepted the truth in Sokhumi in

Babutsa Jejelava in  
1979 and 2016



early 1973. She recalls: “One day, I noticed four women engaged in a lively discussion. Two of them were nuns, and the other two, as I later discovered, were Jehovah’s Witnesses.” One sister was Vladimir Gladyuk’s wife, Lyuba, and the other was Itta Sudarenko, a very zealous pioneer from Ukraine.

Babutsa recalls her feelings when she overheard the conversation, “I listened with my whole heart and soul.” When she heard that God has a personal name, she quickly joined the conversation and asked if she could see it in the Bible. She asked so many questions that the discussion lasted for three hours.

Babutsa was afraid that she would not see the Witnesses again, so she asked, “Will you go away and just leave me here?”

The sisters replied: “No, we won’t leave you. We will come back next Saturday.”

Saturday arrived, and to Babutsa’s great joy, the two sisters came! A Bible study was started right away. Toward the end of the study, Babutsa again felt the need to ensure that she would not lose contact with God’s people. She said to herself: ‘I found these people. Now I have to make sure I don’t lose them.’

Babutsa came up with a plan. She recalls: “I knew that Lyuba was married, so I asked Itta if she too was married. Itta answered that she had no husband. ‘Then move to my apartment!’ I exclaimed. ‘There are two beds, and there is a lamp in between. We can put the Bible under it and talk about the Bible even at night!’”

Itta accepted the invitation and moved into Babutsa's apartment.

Recalling that time, Babutsa says: "Sometimes I would not sleep at night, meditating on what I had learned. Suddenly a question would come to my mind. I would wake Itta up, saying: 'Itta, get your Bible. I have a question!' Rubbing her eyes, Itta would answer, 'All right, my dear.' Then she would open the Bible and show me the answer." Just three days after Itta moved in, Babutsa was out preaching the good news!

Babutsa had a close friend, Natela Chargeishvili. Babutsa remembers: "I thought that wealth would hinder her from accepting the truth, but happily I was wrong. From our very first conversation, the truth began to blaze in her heart." Soon, both were zealously sharing their hope with friends, workmates, and neighbors.

### **Meetings Help All to Grow in Faith**

Christian meetings played an important part in helping new ones to grow in faith. In fact, newly baptized Christians were just as eager to offer their homes to host meetings as were those who had been in the truth for a long time. All who attended were warmly welcomed, and this too greatly strengthened their bonds of love.

When several students were ready for baptism, special meetings were discreetly organized. In August 1973, brothers arranged for such a meeting outside Sokhumi, near the shore of the Black Sea. But the 35 candidates did not have time to get immersed!

Before the meeting ended, the police interrupted it and arrested some brothers and sisters, including Vladimir Gladyuk.

As soon as Vladimir and the other brothers were released, they contacted all the baptismal candidates again. Two days after the first attempt, the candidates finally got baptized. Vladimir recalls: “We felt that Jehovah was on our side. After the baptism, we all prayed together, expressing our gratitude to Jehovah.”

### **Opposition Helps to Spread the Good News**

Two days after the baptism, Vladimir Gladyuk was arrested again. Later, he, Itta Sudarenko, and Natela Chargeishvili were sentenced to prison terms of several years. Though saddened by this arrest, the publishers resolved to carry on in the ministry, but with greater caution.

To avoid drawing the attention of the authorities, the publishers traveled to towns and villages other than their own to preach. As a result, opposition actually helped to spread the good news to even more areas.

During the Communist regime, publishers living in larger cities witnessed in quiet streets and parks. They often encountered people who came from other towns and villages to visit relatives or do some shopping. If an individual showed interest, publishers asked for the person’s address and made arrangements to meet again.

Babutsa Jejelava was among those who traveled extensively throughout western Georgia. She recalls: “Since I had relatives in different places, no one viewed my frequent trips with suspicion. After about

two years, I was studying the Bible with more than 20 people in Zugdidi and 5 others in the town of Chkhorotsku. All of them got baptized.”

### **A Pressing Need for Georgian Literature**

It soon became obvious that there was a pressing need for publications in Georgian. When making return visits or conducting Bible studies, publishers felt the need for Bibles and Bible literature in the language that their students could best understand.\*

Babutsa recalls how difficult it was to conduct a Bible study without any publications in Georgian. She says, “I had only the Bible and other publications in Russian, so I often had to translate the study material for my Bible students.” With nothing but a dictionary to help her, she translated articles from our magazines into Georgian. She also managed to translate the entire Gospel of Matthew!

Interested ones appreciated articles translated into their mother tongue so much that they were willing to make handwritten copies of the publications for their personal use. Because copies of the Bible in the Georgian language were difficult to find, some Bible students even became modern-day “copyists” of the Word of God.

### **“I Copied All Day Long”**

Publications translated into Georgian were circulated among the brothers and interested ones so that

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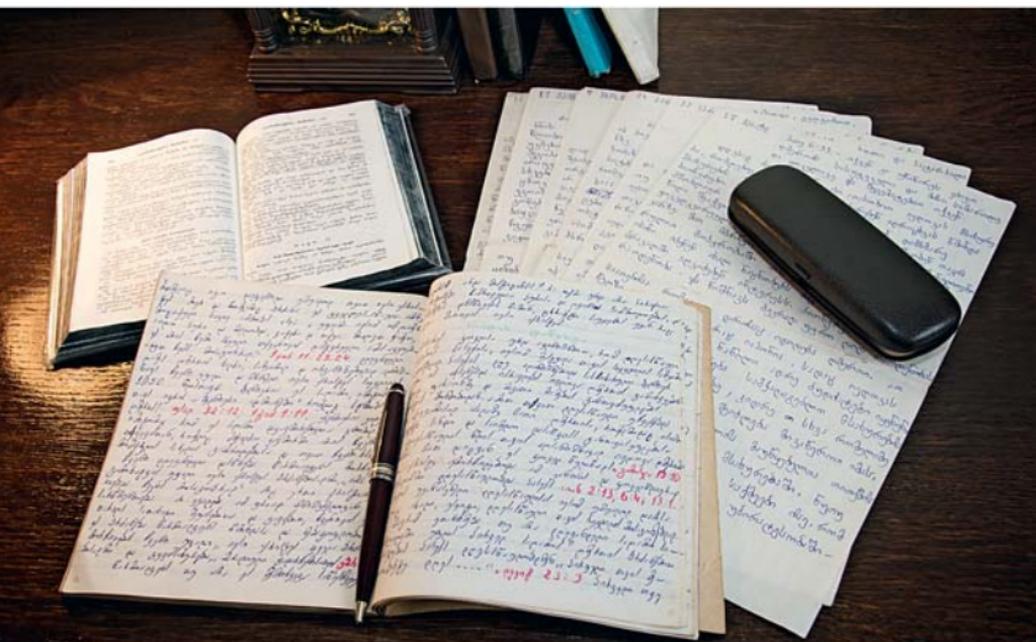
\* Copies of the Bible were scarce during the Communist era, even though parts of the Bible had been translated into Georgian as early as the fifth century C.E.—See the box “The Bible in Georgian.”

everyone could take turns reading them. Each one would have just a few days or weeks to read a publication. So when a copy of the Greek Scriptures in modern Georgian turned up among the brothers, one family seized the opportunity to copy it.

Raul Karchava was only 13 years old when his father asked him to copy the Greek Scriptures. He says: “My father bought a whole box of notebooks and all kinds of pens and pencils, hoping that this would encourage me. Though I felt overwhelmed, I accepted the challenge. I copied all day long, stopping only to stretch my hands a little.”

Raul’s relatives were overjoyed when they learned that the brothers had agreed to leave the highly covet-

Handwritten copies of *The Watchtower* and *Examining the Scriptures Daily* in Georgian



ed book with them for a few additional weeks so that young Raul could complete his arduous work. In just two months, he managed to copy all 27 books of the Christian Greek Scriptures!

Despite the efforts of such hardworking copyists, the spiritual hunger of a growing number of Bible students could not be fully satisfied. In order to fill the urgent need, courageous brothers and sisters undertook the risky task of reproducing and distributing Bible publications from their home.

The preaching work in western Georgia was gaining momentum. But what about the eastern part of the country? Was there anyone in the capital city, Tbilisi,

Courageous Witnesses used small mimeograph machines to reproduce publications in their homes



who could help sincere truth-seekers like Vaso Kveniashvili, mentioned earlier?

### **The Truth Reaches the Capital City**

During the 1970's, the Soviet authorities attempted to discourage the Witnesses by expelling them from their homes in one place after another. That is what happened to Oleksii and Lydia Kurdas, a Ukrainian couple who moved to Tbilisi. They had spent many years in Soviet prison camps because of their faith.

The Kurdases shared the truth with Zaur and Eteri Kessaev, who were very religious people. Their daughter Larisa, aged 15 at the time, relates their first contact with Oleksii and Lydia: "We tried to prove that the Orthodox Church was the only true religion. After several discussions, we ran out of arguments, but they continued to reason from the Scriptures."

Larisa continues: "When we went to church, I would always read the Ten Commandments, which were written on the wall between two icons. But that evening, when Oleksii read Exodus 20:4, 5 to us, I was stunned. I could not sleep that night because I kept thinking, 'Can it really be true that by worshipping icons we are actually breaking God's command?'"

Determined to settle the question, Larisa ran to the local church early the next morning and read again the commandment "You must not make for yourself a carved image . . . You must not bow down to them." For the first time in her life, she realized the meaning of this divine command. Larisa and her parents even-

Larisa Kessaeva (Gudadze)  
in the 1970's



tually got baptized and were among the first Witnesses in Tbilisi.

### **His Quest for Justice Was Rewarded**

Nearly 20 years after his first contact with the truth, Vaso Kveniashvili encountered someone who attended meetings of Jehovah's Witnesses in Tbilisi. Vaso was happy to meet the Witnesses again. He had waited for so long.

At first, though, local Witnesses were reluctant to involve him in their activities, as Vaso was notorious for his criminal background. Some even feared that he might be spying on the Witnesses for the Soviet authorities. Hence, Vaso was not allowed to attend Christian meetings for four years.

When it became clear that Vaso had good motives, he was finally allowed to become part of the local



Some 24 years after his first contact with the truth, Vaso Kveniashvili became a Witness

congregation and get baptized. At last, Vaso could draw closer to the “God of justice” he had been seeking since his youth! (Isa. 30:18) He served Jehovah with that same unflinching attitude until his death in 2014.

By 1990, the preaching work was firmly established in both western and eastern Georgia. Some 900 publishers were conducting 942 Bible studies. The foundation had been laid for the dramatic increase that was to follow.



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**Davit Samkharadze**

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**BORN** 1967

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**BAPTIZED** 1989

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**PROFILE** Served as a traveling overseer. Since 2013, he has been teaching Bible schools.

## I Yearned for a Change in My Life

IN 1985, at age 18, I was drafted for military service by the Soviet authorities. I was so troubled by the injustice and oppression in the military that I told myself: 'I don't want to become like them. I want to be different.' Yet I felt that I could not always behave the way I wished to. I yearned for a change in my life.

After completing my military service, I came home. One night, after a party, I prayed to God, asking him to help me improve. The next day on my way to work, I visited my aunt, who was one of Jehovah's Witnesses. When I entered her house, I found myself before a small group of Witnesses who had gathered for a meeting. They warmly welcomed me, so I decided to stay and listen.

I agreed to a Bible study, and six months later I was baptized. Jehovah helped me to become a better person, a change I could not have made on my own.



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**Tamazi Biblaia**

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**BORN** 1954

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**BAPTIZED** 1982

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**PROFILE** He assisted with underground printing and also served as one of the first traveling overseers in Georgia, while raising four children.

## Looking to Jehovah for Guidance

MY MOTHER was really upset when my wife, Tsitso, and I became Jehovah's Witnesses. One day, she summoned all our relatives, hoping that they would persuade me not to associate with the Witnesses anymore. I was given a choice—either change my mind or be cast out of the family.

I made the decision to leave town. Being a metalworker, I considered moving to the second largest city in Georgia, Kutaisi, where I could easily find employment. I also knew that there was a great need for publishers in that city, so I looked to Jehovah for guidance.

Shortly thereafter, I met one of my Bible students, who lived in a small town called Jvari. When he heard that I was thinking of moving to Kutaisi, he begged me to move to his town instead. "We have an apartment," he told me. "My wife, my children, and I will move to one room, and you and your wife can use the other one."

Since I was seeking Jehovah's direction, I told him that I would temporarily accept his offer only if I quickly found both a job and a place to rent in Jvari. To my great surprise, he came back the same evening with a list of job offers.

A few days later, my family settled in Jvari. From the very first day, I had a job with a surprisingly high salary. My new boss offered me accommodations in a large house owned by the company. Soon after, I was asked to help with the underground printing of Bible literature. We had plenty of space in our new home, so my wife and I made it available for this activity.

For many years, our spacious house hosted the Memorial and other special events. Over 500 individuals got baptized under our roof! I am so glad that I saw evidence of Jehovah's direction and followed it!





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**Natela Grigoriadis**

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**BORN** 1960

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**BAPTIZED** 1987

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**PROFILE** Soon after baptism, Natela used her experience and contacts as a merchandising manager to advance the underground printing.

## “With God All Things Are Possible”

AT OUR meetings in the late 1980’s, only the *Watchtower* Study conductor had a copy of the magazine, and it was usually a handwritten one. I approached Genadi Gudadze, one of the elders, and suggested that we should try to print our own magazines.

Until then, the brothers had used a homemade mimeograph to produce a small quantity of publications. To produce magazines regularly, they needed a more efficient mimeograph, an experienced typist, a typewriter, and a steady supply of stencil paper. However, all printing equipment, even the paper, was registered with the government and controlled by the special security services.

I obtained a typewriter through a professional acquaintance who had access to discarded machines that were no longer under government control. My sister was a typist and could assist us. The brothers built a new mimeo-

graph and located a source for purchasing stencils. Everything fell into place, and soon our first copy of an issue of *The Watchtower* in Georgian was produced.

But a new obstacle arose. One day, Genadi told me, “We have to find another source of supply for the stencils.” He had seen packages of stencils in a government-run office but could not purchase them himself, as he was watched by the authorities. How could we obtain them? I repeatedly exclaimed, “It’s impossible!” To this Genadi firmly replied, “Stop saying, ‘It’s impossible.’ ‘With God all things are possible!’”—Matt. 19:26.

I thought about this continually as I nervously headed to the government-run office the next day. Jehovah directed me to a friendly typist who was willing to submit my request to the head of the office. He was her husband! Soon I was regularly buying stencils from this office, and after that we never experienced a problem with supplies.





The Mokvi Four Gospels, a Georgian manuscript of the 14th century

## The Bible in Georgian

GEORGIAN was one of the earliest languages into which the Bible was translated, along with Armenian, Coptic, Latin, Syriac, and others. Old Georgian manuscripts of the Gospels, the letters of Paul, and the Psalms have been dated to the mid-fifth century C.E. or even earlier. In the following centuries, the translating and copying of the Bible into Georgian increased, resulting in several versions.\*

The Bible strongly influenced the literature and traditional values of the Georgian people. For example, the tragic story of Queen Shushanik, likely written in the late fifth century, includes quotations from and allusions to various passages of the Bible. In his epic poem *Vepkhvistqaosani* (The Knight in the Panther's Skin), composed about 1220, poet Shota Rustaveli alluded to Christian moral values. He wrote on themes such as friendship, generosity, and love for strangers—values that are still considered moral ideals among the Georgian people.

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\* For more information, see the article "A Treasure Hidden for Centuries," in the June 1, 2013, issue of *The Watchtower*.

Brothers at a meeting held in Tbilisi in 1992



**1991-1997**

**“God Kept Making It Grow.”**

**—1 Cor. 3:6.**

GEORGIA became independent in 1991, the year the Soviet Union was dissolved. But political changes and civil unrest caused a rapid deterioration in living conditions. Genadi Gudadze, who served as a circuit overseer in those years, recalls that people would stand in line for bread almost an entire day.

During this time it was not unusual for the Witnesses to share the Bible's message with groups of people waiting in line. "In those difficult years," Genadi says, "it seemed that everyone was favorably disposed to the truth. We received hundreds of slips with addresses of those who wanted a Bible study."

Preaching to people waiting in breadlines in the 1990's



At the end of each meeting, responsible brothers would read a list of names and addresses of individuals who had asked for a visit. Publishers would then make themselves available to call on them.

Brother Levani Sabashvili, who served as an elder in Tbilisi, remembers a married couple who asked to be visited. “All the addresses were taken by various publishers,” he recalls, “but no one volunteered to visit this couple. They lived far away, and many of us already had several Bible studies.”

A few months later, the same couple sent another request. They eventually sent a third request, but this time with a note in which they begged the Witnesses to remain free of bloodguilt. (Acts 20:26, 27) Levani recalls: “It was New Year’s season, and we usually avoided visiting people at that time. But we felt we could no longer postpone our visit.”

This spiritually thirsty couple, Roini and Nana Grigalashvili, could hardly believe their eyes when one chilly morning they saw Levani and another brother at their door. They immediately started to study the Bible. Roini and Nana now serve as regular pioneers along with their children.

### **Tireless Efforts to Reach Interested Ones**

Because they were so grateful, those who accepted the truth gave selflessly of their time, energy, and resources to share the good news with others. Despite family responsibilities, Badri and Marina Kopaliani were among those who traveled tirelessly to remote villages in order to help sincere individuals.

On weekends, Badri and Marina, along with their teenage sons, Gocha and Levani, organized trips to the Dusheti region, a beautiful mountainous area north of Tbilisi. At times, they traveled some 90 miles on winding roads to reach distant villages.

One day a woman invited Badri and his wife to her workplace. Badri relates: “We found ourselves in a large room where about 50 people were waiting for us! At first, I was taken aback, but after praying to Jehovah, I began discussing verses from Matthew 24 on the features of the last days. One surprised person asked, ‘Why don’t our priests tell us these things?’ ”

### **The Memorial Attracts Attention**

The Memorial of Jesus’ death gave many sincere Georgians further opportunity to hear about the truth. In 1990, for example, the Memorial held at Sister Ia

Genadi Gudadze  
served as a circuit  
overseer in the  
early 1990's





la Badridze received 200 people for the Memorial in her apartment

Badridze's home in Tbilisi caused a great deal of interest in the neighborhood.

Sister Badridze offered to host the Memorial in her apartment. With the help of her children, she emptied the living room to make space. But how would she find enough chairs for her guests? In Georgia, it was customary for families to rent tables and chairs for large gatherings. Since she only rented chairs, store owners kept asking: "Don't you need tables? How are you going to eat?"

Sister Badridze managed to accommodate all those who came to her 13th-floor apartment to commemorate Jesus' death. Amazingly, 200 people attended! No wonder many neighbors asked questions about Jehovah's Witnesses!

### **A Memorable Memorial**

In 1992, large auditoriums were rented for the Memorial in various parts of the country. Davit Samkharadze, who lived in Gori, recalls how the traveling overseer inquired about their plans for the Memorial.

On learning that publishers were planning to meet in a private home, he asked: “Don’t you have a large auditorium in the city? Why not try to rent it?” Since the auditorium could hold more than 1,000 people, the local publishers—numbering just over 100—did not see the need to rent such a large hall.

The traveling overseer then suggested: “If each publisher can get ten people to come, all the seats will be filled.” Although his advice may have seemed unrealistic at first, the local publishers put forth great effort to follow it. To their amazement and great delight, no fewer than 1,036 persons attended the Memorial!\*

### **Zealous Pioneers Reach New Territories**

By 1992, there were still a number of regions in Georgia where Jehovah’s people had not yet preached the Bible’s message. How could these new territories be reached when the country was facing a deep economic crisis?

Tamazi Biblaia, who lived in western Georgia at the time, recalls: “A traveling overseer met with a few of us to discuss what could be done. We did not have much information about how the special pioneer arrangement should be organized. But we knew that the good news had to be preached urgently.” (2 Tim. 4:2) Consequently, they selected 16 pioneers and assigned them to various locations throughout the country.—See the accompanying map.

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\* In 1992, Georgia had 1,869 zealous publishers and a Memorial attendance of 10,332.

In May 1992, a three-hour meeting was held in Tbilisi to encourage the pioneers who were assigned to work those territories for five months. Each month, elders visited them to provide spiritual support as well as material aid if needed.

Two pioneer sisters, Manea Aduashvili and Nazy Zhvania, were assigned to the town of Ozurgeti. Manea, who was 60 years old at the time, remembers: “We knew that an interested person lived close to Ozurgeti. So, as soon as we arrived, we arranged to meet her. When we arrived at the woman’s house, she was waiting for us, as were about 30 others whom she had invited. That day we started several Bible studies.”

The following months were just as productive. After only five months, 12 individuals were ready for baptism!

### **Their Self-Sacrificing Spirit Paid Off**

Two pioneer brothers, Pavle Abdushelishvili and Paa-ta Morbedadze, were sent to Tsageri. It is located in a

Locations where pioneers were assigned for a five-month period



region that is a stronghold of ancient traditions mixed with teachings of Christendom.

As the harsh winter approached, the pioneers' five-month assignment was about to end, and Paata was invited to help with translation work elsewhere. So Pavle had to make a decision. He relates: "I was aware that spending winter in Tsageri would be tough. But our Bible students needed more help, so I decided to stay."

"I stayed with a local family," recalls Pavle. "Most of the day, I was out preaching. In the evening I joined the family around the woodstove in the living room on the first floor. But when the time came for me to go up to my room, I put on my warm hat and then slept under a thick blanket."

When elders were able to visit Pavle in the spring, 11 individuals had qualified to become unbaptized publishers. Soon, all were baptized.

### **Caring Shepherds Provide Training**

In the early 1990's, most congregations in Georgia had only one elder or ministerial servant. Typically, congregations were made up of various groups meeting separately, since publishers were scattered over a vast territory that included several towns or villages.

Joni Shalamberidze and Pavle Abdushelishvili—who had both already served in remote territories—were assigned to provide help in Telavi, a city located in the Kakheti region. The congregation there had 300 publishers, but not even one elder. It consisted of 13 groups that met in different locations.



▲ Pavle Abdushelishvili

◀ Joni Shalamberidze with Tamazi Biblaia  
in the early 1990's

Joni and Pavle soon noticed a major obstacle to spiritual advancement among the brothers. Joni explains: “Many brothers owned large fields and vineyards. Since it is customary in rural areas for neighbors to help one another with their farmwork, our brothers spent much time with unbelievers.”—1 Cor. 15:33.

Joni and Pavle suggested that the brothers ask for help from fellow Witnesses to get their crops in. By doing so, they would benefit from good association while doing their farmwork. (Eccl. 4:9, 10) Joni notes, “The bonds of brotherly love in the congregation became stronger.” When Joni and Pavle left the Kakheti region three years later, there were 5 local elders and 12 ministerial servants.

### **Meetings Improve Preaching Skills**

Because our work was under restriction until the early 1990’s, the Witnesses met in small groups and only for the Congregation Book Study and the *Watchtower* Study. These meetings, though encouraging, were not designed to train publishers for the ministry.

This changed when the Communist regime fell. Now Jehovah’s organization directed congregations to hold the Theocratic Ministry School and the Service Meeting as part of their weekly meetings.

Naili Khutsishvili and her sister Lali Alekperova have fond memories of attending those meetings. Lali recalls: “It was a very exciting time. Everyone was so thrilled that sisters could now participate in the program.”

“In one demonstration,” recounts Naili, “the householder was reading a newspaper on the platform when she heard a knock at the door. When invited in, two sisters entered the meeting place through the main door and stepped up to the platform!” Lali adds, “As unusual as those meetings sometimes were, they helped us to improve our preaching skills.”

### **The Need for Spiritual Food Increases**

For many years, a few brothers reproduced Bible literature at home, using hand-operated duplicators. To meet the increasing demand for publications, the brothers now turned to commercial printing companies that could print our magazines at a reasonable price.

The brothers were resourceful when preparing a master copy for the printers. The translated Georgian text was neatly typed according to the layout of the original English magazine. The brothers then cut out illustrations from the original magazine and pasted them onto the typewritten document. Finally, they cut out characters from newspapers that used attractive fonts and glued them onto the cover page. The master copy was now ready to go to press!

When personal computers became available, two young brothers, Levani Kopaliani and Leri Mirzashvili, attended courses to learn how best to use them. Leri recalls: “We lacked experience, and things did not always run smoothly. But with Jehovah’s help, we were soon typing and composing our magazines.”



- ▲ To prepare the master Georgian copies of our magazines for printing, the brothers cut letters from newspapers and glued them onto the original English cover page



- ▶ Early locally printed issues of the magazines in Georgian

Despite the obstacles, congregations throughout Georgia started to receive locally printed, four-color magazines. In time, however, it became difficult to keep up with the growing demand. Just at the right time, Jehovah's servants in Georgia received loving guidance from Jehovah's organization.

### **A Turning Point**

The 1992 international convention in St. Petersburg, Russia, provided an opportunity for brothers from Georgia to meet with branch representatives from Germany. "They explained how the translation work is usually done," relates Genadi Gudadze. "They told us that in time we would receive a visit that would help us with the translation work."

Printing Bible publications in Georgian was far from simple. Since this language has a unique script, the organization's Multilanguage Electronic Publishing System (MEPS) did not yet support the Georgian alphabet. Consequently, a new font had to be designed for photo-composition and printing operations.

Previously, at the end of the 1970's, a Georgian family, the Datikashvilis, had emigrated to the United States, where one of their children, Marina, later learned the truth. Her help proved to be invaluable when brothers at Brooklyn Bethel began to draw each Georgian character in order to integrate the alphabet into the MEPS system. Soon, some tracts and the brochure "*Look! I Am Making All Things New*" were printed in Germany.

## **Help in Organizing the Translation Work**

In 1993, Michael Fleckenstein and his wife, Silvia, arrived in Tbilisi from the Germany branch to set up a translation office. “I still had the St. Petersburg meeting on my mind,” says Michael. “On our arrival in Tbilisi 18 months later, we were surprised when we were introduced to a well-functioning translation team!”

Within a few months, a group of 11 full-time translators were working in an office located in a small apartment. Thanks to the valuable training provided by Jehovah’s organization, a steady supply of spiritual food started to be delivered to the congregations.

## **Delivering Spiritual Food in Times of Unrest**

After the breakup of the Soviet Union, civil unrest and ethnic conflicts arose in many of the former republics, and Georgia was no exception. As a result, traveling—especially across state borders—became risky.

One day in November 1994, Aleko Gvritishvili was crossing a state border with two other brothers when a

Leri Mirzashvili, Paata Morbedadze, and Levani Kopaliani working in the Tbilisi translation office in 1993



group of armed men stopped them and ordered them to get out of their car. “They became angry when they saw our Bible literature,” relates Aleko. “They lined us up as if they were going to execute us. We fervently prayed to Jehovah. After about two hours, one of them told us, ‘Take your literature and go—but if you come back, we’ll set your car on fire and finish you off.’”

Despite such intimidation, the brothers continued delivering spiritual food. Brother Zaza Jikurashvili, who made great sacrifices to bring Bible literature into Georgia, states: “We knew that our brothers needed spiritual food. Our dear wives gave us a lot of support.”

“Many of the brothers involved in transporting literature were family men,” remarks Aleko. What motivated them to carry on despite the danger? He continues: “Primarily, it was our deep gratitude toward Jehovah and our love for him. We also wanted to reflect Jehovah’s way of caring for our dear brothers and sisters.”

Thanks to the self-sacrificing spirit of such brothers, literature deliveries never stopped during the years of unrest. Later the brothers established safer routes between Germany and Georgia.

### **Timely Spiritual Encouragement**

When the political situation stabilized in 1995, the Witnesses made arrangements to hold their first district convention. In the summer of 1996, some 6,000 delegates from all over Georgia attended district conventions in three locations: Gori, Marneuli, and Tsnori.

The convention near Gori was especially memorable for those in attendance. What a change from the time

when the brothers were not sure whether they could fill the local auditorium for the Memorial! They now expected over two thousand to attend, but they could not find a location spacious enough to host the event. They decided to hold the convention outdoors, at a beautiful mountain camping area not far from the city.

Brother Kako Lomidze, who served on the Convention Committee, notes: "After the program, the brothers and sisters spent time together, singing songs and enjoying warm association. It became evident to all that God's people were united by strong bonds of love." —John 13:35.

### **Loving Provisions Stimulate Growth**

Starting in 1996, arrangements were made for traveling overseers to visit each congregation in the country for a full week. To meet this goal, new traveling overseers were appointed to join the brothers who had already been serving in western and eastern Georgia.

Undoubtedly, the "loving labor" and faithful service of these traveling overseers helped congregations to grow and follow theocratic instructions more closely. (1 Thess. 1:3) From 1990 to 1997, the increase was indeed extraordinary. While 904 publishers reported their activity in 1990, only seven years later, 11,082 were proclaiming the good news!

The spiritual growth that had started decades earlier was now evident and had spread throughout the country. But Jehovah had more blessings in store for his people in Georgia.

- ▶ Brothers Zaza Jikurashvili and Aleko Gvritishvili (shown with their wives) delivered literature during the years of unrest
- ▼ Witnesses attending the district convention near Gori in 1996





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**Marina Kopaliani**

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**BORN** 1957

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**BAPTIZED** 1990

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**PROFILE** Marina and her husband, Badri, became tireless publishers, while raising two sons. Badri later served on the Country Committee and remained faithful until his death in 2010.

## My Husband Could Not Stop Reading!

IN 1989, my husband and I met the Witnesses at our neighbor's place. Brother Givi Barnadze, who was studying the Bible with our neighbor, did not have a copy of his own, because it was hard to find Bibles in Georgia at that time.

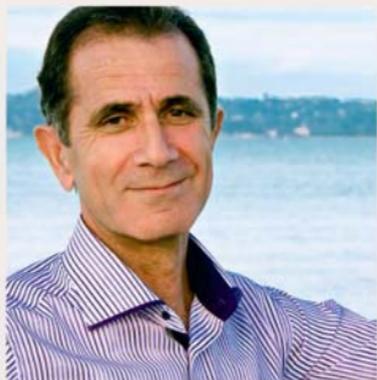
We appreciated what we heard and desired to obtain a Bible. When my husband saw his fleshly brother, he told him that he was looking for a Bible. To his surprise, his brother replied that he had recently bought a new version of the Bible in Georgian and that he would be happy to give him this Bible as a gift.

When Badri came back home, he sat at the table and read the Bible until nightfall. The next day, he woke up and continued reading. When I came home from work,

I found him sitting at the table, still reading the Scriptures. He could not stop reading! So I suggested that he take a few days off to complete his reading. Soon he had managed to read the entire Bible.

When we later began studying the book *The Truth That Leads to Eternal Life* with Brother Barnadze, we were very glad to have our own Bible. It worked out well because we did not have a personal copy of the *Truth* book and our teacher did not have a Bible! About a year later, Badri and I were baptized.





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**Artur Gerekhelia**

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**BORN** 1956

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**BAPTIZED** 1991

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**PROFILE** Only eight months after his baptism, he left his house and a flourishing business in order to serve where the need was greater.

## Where Have You Been Until Now?

I WAS newly baptized when the elders asked me if I would like to expand my ministry. On May 4, 1992, I attended a special meeting organized for those who were ready to move where the need was greater. The next day, my service partner and I moved to the port of Batumi, in the Ajara region.

The first time I preached in Batumi, I felt very nervous. I asked myself, ‘How should I approach people?’ I was surprised by the reaction of the first woman I met, who exclaimed, “Where have you been until now?” She was so eager to know more about the Witnesses that she started studying the Bible with us the very next day!

Before leaving for Batumi, we received a list of addresses of interested people. Since we did not know the city well, we asked people in the street for directions. Many

were unable to help us because most streets had recently been renamed, but they showed interest in our message. Soon we were conducting Bible study sessions with groups of 10 to 15 individuals.

Only four months after our arrival, more than 40 were regularly attending our meetings. So we asked ourselves, 'Who will look after these new ones?' Then, as a result of the conflict between the Georgian army and separatists in Abkhazia, all the members of the congregation I was previously in moved to Batumi. A new congregation with experienced elders and pioneers was formed in just one day!





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**Madona Kankia**

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**BORN** 1962

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**BAPTIZED** 1990

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**PROFILE** A former member of the Communist Party in Georgia, she has helped many people to learn the truth. In 2015, she graduated from the first class of the School for Kingdom Evangelizers in Tbilisi.

## I Felt That My Life Was a Success

WHEN I heard about Bible truth back in 1989, I was a prominent member of the Communist Party in my hometown, Senaki, and I regularly sat on the Supreme Soviet of Georgia, equivalent to today's parliament. I was also engaged to a young man, so I felt that my life was a success.

Mom and Dad instilled in me a love for God. Hence, I believed in God, even though I was a Communist. When I started studying the Bible, I found satisfying answers to all my questions, so I decided to dedicate my life to Jehovah. But my family, friends, colleagues, and fiancé did not agree with my decision.

My new faith caused my relatives to reject me, and it was also incompatible with my political career. I concluded that I had no choice but to leave home, break off my

engagement, and resign from my job as well as the Communist Party and the Supreme Soviet. After my baptism, I felt even more pressure from friends and family. Because I was well-known in my hometown, I moved to the city of Kutaisi, where I immediately started pioneering.

When people ask me if my faith was worth the hardships I went through, I answer without hesitation that I am completely happy with the decisions I made. Although my parents did not understand my choices, I am grateful that they taught me to love God and neighbor. This has helped me greatly in life.





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### **Gizo Narmania and Igor Ochigava**

These two brothers worked together to help fellow believers during the war in Abkhazia.

## True Christian Love Never Fails

**Igor:** We both belonged to a group of Witnesses located in the town of Tkvarcheli, Abkhazia. Since the congregation that our group was associated with was situated some 50 miles away in the city of Jvari, I traveled to Jvari monthly to collect Bible literature for the remote group. In 1992, soon after the Soviet Union fell, the autonomous region of Abkhazia tried to separate. A war between separatists and the Georgian army broke out, causing much hardship.

**Gizo:** I was baptized at the age of 21, just a year before the conflict started. When the war broke out, the brothers were temporarily paralyzed by fear and uncertainty. But Igor, who has always been a good shepherd, encouraged us, saying: “This is the time when people need comfort.



We are going to stay spiritually strong only if we carry on with our ministry.” So with due caution, every day we continued sharing with our neighbors the comforting message from God’s Word.

**Igor:** Because of the conflict, we could not use the usual route we took to and from Jvari to obtain our literature. Since I grew up in the region, I was able to find a safe passage through the tea plantations and mountains. But there was still the risk of meeting a group of armed men or stepping on a land mine. However, I did not want to put my brothers’ lives at risk, so I traveled alone once a month. With Jehovah’s help, I always managed to obtain timely spiritual food that helped us remain spiritually alive.

Although there was no fighting in Tkvarcheli, our town was soon under blockade, and as a result, we began experiencing wartime hardships. As winter approached, food was running out and we were all worried about our survival. How happy we were to hear that our brothers in Jvari had organized a relief mission to help us!

**Gizo:** One day, Igor asked my family if our house could be used to store and distribute food supplies prepared by our brothers. He was planning to get provisions from Jvari. We were worried about his safety, knowing that he would have to pass several checkpoints and might encounter armed men and thieves.—John 15:13.

How we rejoiced when Igor came back safe and sound a few days later, driving a car packed with enough food to fill our needs for the following winter months! In those difficult times, we experienced firsthand that true Christian love never fails.—1 Cor. 13:8.



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**Pepo Devidze**

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**BORN** 1976

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**BAPTIZED** 1993

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**PROFILE** She was brought up in the Georgian Orthodox Church and strictly observed its traditions. After learning Bible truth, she worked at Bethel with her husband. Currently they serve as special pioneers.

## I Saw With My Own Eyes What the Bible Says!

I **FIRST** heard about the Witnesses when I was a college student in the city of Kutaisi. A neighbor told me that the Witnesses do not use icons in their worship and do not believe that Jesus is Almighty God. This contradicted beliefs I cherished as an Orthodox Christian.

When I returned to my hometown, Tsageri, in the summer of 1992, I found out that the Witnesses were active there too. My mother had heard many positive things about the Witnesses. Because I still had a negative view of them, she told me, “Go and see for yourself what they teach.”

Two pioneer brothers, Pavle and Paata, regularly visited a family in our neighborhood. Many neighbors took advan-

tage of their visits to listen to them and ask questions. So I decided to attend those discussions. Each time I raised a question, the brothers opened the Bible and asked me to read in it. That made a big impression on me—I saw with my own eyes what the Bible says!

I soon joined a group with whom the brothers were studying the Bible. The following summer, ten of us got baptized. Later, my mom also became one of Jehovah's Witnesses.

Looking back, I am grateful that the brothers answered all my questions by letting me read the answers from the Bible. This helped me to resolve the inner conflict I faced as my own beliefs were challenged. Remembering how much opening the Bible this way helped me, I use this approach to help others appreciate the truth!





**1998-2006**

**Blessings “in Favorable Times  
and Difficult Times.”**

**—2 Tim. 4:2.**

FROM the late 1990's onward, the Witnesses in Georgia enjoyed an outstanding increase in the number of publishers and interested ones. In 1998, no fewer than 32,409 individuals attended the Memorial of Christ's death.

Many publishers, though, including elders, were relatively new in the truth and lacked experience. Most needed training in various aspects of their spiritual activities. But how would such training be provided?

### **Jehovah's Organization Provides More Support**

Arno and Sonja Tüngler, two graduates of the Gilead Extension School in Germany, were assigned to Georgia in March 1998. That same year, the Governing Body approved the opening of a country office in Georgia, supervised by the Russia branch.

A Country Committee soon began to oversee the preaching activity. Once our activities were legally registered, Bible literature was directly imported from what was then known as the Germany branch. Legal recognition also opened the way for us to purchase properties on which to build Kingdom Halls and branch facilities.

### **A Time of Spiritual Training**

Many publishers had not been able to preach openly from door to door during the many years of ban under the Soviet regime. Arno Tüngler recalls: "Most



Arno and Sonja  
Tüngler

publishers did a lot of street witnessing, but not all of them were used to going from door to door and keeping track of interest shown.”

Davit Devidze, who started serving in the newly established country office in May 1999, relates: “There was plenty to do in the field and at Bethel. There were things we had read about but had no idea how to do. So we observed and learned from the experienced brothers sent by the Governing Body.”

An intensive training period started for the brothers in Georgia. But as is often the case for those who move to serve where the need is greater, the benefits of giving training are not one-sided. (Prov. 27:17) Indeed, those who came to help learned much from the local brothers and sisters.

### **Local Witnesses Show Endearing Qualities**

Arno and Sonja have fond memories of the warm welcome they received in the days following their arriv-

al in Georgia. The local brothers and sisters did all they could to help them adjust to their new assignment.

Sonja remembers their generosity. She relates: “A couple who lived nearby kept bringing us delicious food. A sister took us in field service, introduced us to our new congregation, and told us a lot about Georgian culture. Another sister patiently taught us the Georgian language.”

Warren and Leslie Shewfelt, who were assigned to Georgia from Canada in 1999, said: “We became enamored of and humbled by the affection manifested by our Georgian brothers and sisters. All of them, including the young, freely expressed their feelings and love for one another.”

Those assigned to Georgia from foreign countries looked beyond the challenges they were facing and

Local brothers served with experienced missionaries at the country office



focused on the fine qualities of the local people. In turn, the humble and loving approach of the missionaries quickly endeared them to the Georgian brothers.

### **God-Fearing People Respond to the Truth**

Throughout the 1990's, many sincere individuals continued to respond to the truth. In the year 1998 alone, 1,724 persons were baptized. What moved so many Georgians to show interest in the truth?

Tamazi Biblaia, who served for many years as a traveling overseer, explains: "Love for God was one of the traditional values that had been instilled in the people. So when we shared the Bible's message with them, they naturally responded to it."

Davit Samkharadze, who serves as an instructor in the School for Kingdom Evangelizers, remarks: "When a person begins to study the Bible, relatives and neighbors often interfere. As they attempt to dissuade the student from pursuing his Bible study, many of them often end up studying the Bible themselves!"

As the Kingdom message spread, it changed the lives of many people. In April 1999, spiritual growth reached a new peak with 36,669 attending the Memorial.

### **"There Are Many Opposers"**

Concerning his preaching activity in ancient Ephesus, the apostle Paul wrote: "A large door that leads to activity has been opened to me, but there are many opposers." (1 Cor. 16:9) His words well describe the situation the Witnesses in Georgia faced just a few months after the landmark Memorial of 1999.

In August of that year, members of an extremist Orthodox group, led by the defrocked priest Vasili Mkalavishvili, organized a rally in Tbilisi and publicly burned our literature. This triggered a wave of persecution that lasted four years.

On October 17, 1999, a few religious extremists rallied a mob of about 200 and disrupted a meeting held by the Gldani Congregation in Tbilisi. Using wooden clubs and iron crosses, they assaulted those present, causing several Witnesses to be hospitalized.

Sadly, the attackers were not arrested, and assaults against the Witnesses continued. A number of government officials, including President Shevardnadze, strongly condemned those violent attacks, but no clear action was taken. In fact, police officers would usually arrive long after an attack had been carried out.

About the same time, a member of the Georgian parliament, Guram Sharadze, initiated an unprecedented smear campaign against the Witnesses. He accused the Witnesses of being dangerous. It seemed that “favorable times” for preaching the good news were a thing of the past.

### **Jehovah's Organization Responds to Opposition**

Jehovah's organization responded promptly to the needs of the Witnesses in Georgia. The brothers received loving direction on how to react if they were attacked. And they were reminded of the reasons why true Christians at times endure persecution.—2 Tim. 3:12.



Starting in 1999, Jehovah's Witnesses in Georgia were the target of protests, book burning, and assault

In addition, Jehovah's organization took legal measures to defend our brothers in court. A brother who served in the Legal Department at the Georgia branch recalls: "During those four years, we filed more than 800 complaints in response to the actions of Vasili Mkalavishvili's group. We asked officials and human rights organizations to help us. The world headquarters of Jehovah's Witnesses launched an extensive publicity campaign, but nothing stopped the attacks."\*

### **Threats Did Not Stop Them From Serving Jehovah**

Our brothers and sisters were not intimidated, and they continued meeting together. Elders wisely took preventive measures to protect publishers. Brother André Carbonneau, a Canadian lawyer who defended our brothers in those years, recalls: "A brother would usually be stationed near the meeting place with a cell phone. If he saw a mob approaching, he would immediately warn the elders of a potential attack."

After every incident, two representatives from the branch office visited the brothers in order to strengthen them. "It was remarkable," says André, "that branch representatives would usually find a meeting place packed with happy, smiling brothers and sisters."

Those not directly affected by attacks, including Bible students, showed similar determination. André recalls talking to a woman who was about to become an unbaptized publisher. She told him, "When I watched

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\* For more information on the legal battle for recognition of our rights, see *Awake!* of January 22, 2002, pages 18-24.



- ▲ Arsonists destroyed the home of the Shamoyan family (left) and a literature depot (right)
- ◀ Destruction of personal property did not stop our brothers and sisters from serving Jehovah

those attacks on television, I saw the difference between true and false Christians, and I want to be a true Christian.”

### **Courageously Defending Fellow Believers**

In those challenging years, publishers showed exemplary faith and courage by remaining busy in the preaching work. Those involved in defending fellow believers in court demonstrated similar faith.

The Witnesses were often misrepresented in media reports as people who break up families, refuse medical



- ▲ Brothers faced persecutors both inside and outside the courtroom
- ▶ Courageous brothers from the Legal Department in the United States defended fellow believers in court



treatment, and act against the State. Those who defended them as lawyers actually risked their reputation and career.

John Burns, a lawyer from the Canada branch, who assisted the Georgian brothers in those years, recalls: “Local brothers and sisters who worked as lawyers made themselves available. Despite possible consequences to their job, they were not afraid to go to court and identify themselves as Jehovah’s Witnesses.” Those courageous Witnesses contributed to “the

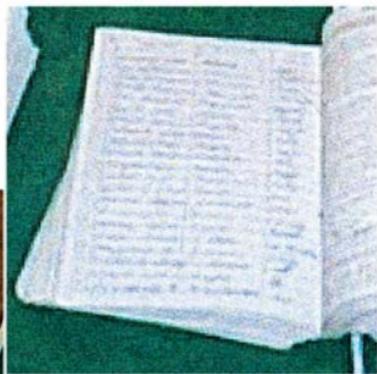
defending and legally establishing of the good news.”  
—Phil. 1:7.

### **Georgians Speak Up Against Violence**

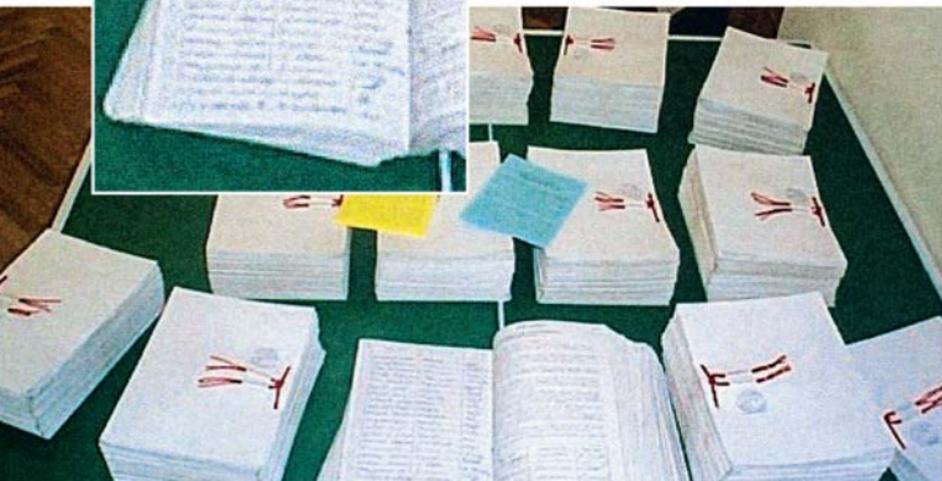
In the meantime, violent acts against the Witnesses continued. Therefore, beginning on January 8, 2001, the Witnesses circulated a petition that called for protection from mob attacks and for the prosecution of those who had assaulted peaceful citizens.

Brother Burns explains the purpose of the petition: “Our aim was to show that most Georgians disapproved of such violence against Jehovah’s Witnesses and that a small group of religious extremists were actually responsible for it.”

Within just two weeks, 133,375 adults from all regions of Georgia—most of whom were Orthodox—signed



Thousands of Georgians signed a petition that condemned violence against the Witnesses



the petition. Although the petition was presented to President Shevardnadze, the violence did not stop. Religious extremists continued deliberately targeting the Witnesses.

Meanwhile, Jehovah continued to bless his people. While religious extremists were busy causing trouble for God's people, Jehovah God was calling many sincere individuals out of false religion.

### **Breaking Free From False Religion**

For most of her life, Babilina Kharatishvili was a devoted member of the Georgian Orthodox Church. When she was in her 30's, she traveled from town to town and from village to village teaching people about the lives led by the saints.

But Babilina wanted to know more about God. So she decided to attend lectures at a Georgian Orthodox seminary. On one occasion, a clergyman showed the book *Knowledge That Leads to Everlasting Life* to his listeners and encouraged them to obtain a copy of it from Jehovah's Witnesses. He told them, "This book can teach you a lot about the Bible."

Babilina was shocked. She had always avoided the Witnesses, and now a clergyman recommended their books! She told herself, 'If I should learn about God from Jehovah's Witnesses, what am I doing here?' She immediately contacted the Witnesses in the city of Poti and started studying the Bible.

As Babilina learned more from the Bible, she made important changes in her life. She once said: "When I saw with my own eyes that the Bible says it is wrong to



Babilina shared Bible truth with her granddaughter, Izabela

worship icons, I shunned all forms of idolatry. I was convinced that it was the right thing to do.” In her late 70’s at the time, she decided to become one of Jehovah’s Witnesses.

Sadly, in 2001, Babilina became ill and passed away before she could get baptized. But her granddaughter, Izabela, later got baptized and is now faithfully serving Jehovah.

### **She Wanted to Become a Nun**

Eliso Dzidzishvili was 28 years old when she decided to become a nun. Since there was no convent close to her hometown, Tkibuli, she moved to Tbilisi in 2001. While searching for a vacancy in a convent, she took a part-time job as a private teacher. One of her pupils happened to be the daughter of a sister named Nunu.

Eliso relates: “We often talked about the Bible. I fiercely defended the Orthodox religion, while Nunu



Eliso Dzidzishvili (left), who wanted to be a nun, and Nunu Kopaliani (right)

patiently showed me one verse after another. One day, she offered to read me the brochure *What Does God Require of Us?* As we read paragraphs and looked up Bible verses, I realized that worshipping icons is in direct violation of God’s command.”

Later, Eliso went to the local church and asked a priest some questions. From his answers it was clear that the church’s teachings were not based on the Bible. (Mark 7:7, 8) Convinced that she had found the truth, she immediately started to study the Bible with Jehovah’s Witnesses and soon got baptized.

### **Building Kingdom Halls Despite Opposition**

By 2001, a growing number of congregations needed suitable places to meet for worship. According to one estimate, some 70 Kingdom Halls were needed. Hence, a Kingdom Hall construction program was initiated despite the opposition in the country.—Ezra 3:3.



Soon a construction crew began remodeling a building that had previously been used by several congregations in Tbilisi. Two projects quickly followed—one in Tbilisi and another in Chiatura, in western Georgia.

Brother Tamazi Khutsishvili, who worked on the project in Chiatura, remembers: “Fifteen of us worked on the site every day. Soon everybody in town knew we were building a new hall. At times we heard rumors that our opponents wanted to come and destroy the Kingdom Hall.”

In view of such opposition, how successful could the construction project be? Tamazi says: “We continued our work and finished the Kingdom Hall in three months. Despite the threats, no opposers ever came.”\*

### **Long-Awaited Relief**

In October 2003, a construction project was started in the city of Samtredia. Once again, religious extremists

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\* From 2001 to 2003, seven Kingdom Halls were built throughout the country.

A Kingdom Hall in Tbilisi (left) was replaced with a new one (right)

threatened the local brothers. In fact, the walls had just been erected and the mortar was still wet when opposers came and tore down the building.

However, in November 2003, a new development in Georgia brought relief to our brothers and sisters. A change in government opened the door to more religious tolerance. As a result, several members of the extremist Orthodox group that had attacked Jehovah's Witnesses were arrested.

### **Showers of Blessings Upon God's People**

Shortly after the persecution ended, Jehovah's people in Georgia received many spiritual blessings. At the 2004 district convention, the *New World Translation of*

Members of the extremist Orthodox group and their leader, Vasili Mkalavishvili, under arrest





Release of the *New World Translation* in Georgian in 2006

*the Christian Greek Scriptures* in the Georgian language was released.

Then, at the 2006 “Deliverance at Hand!” District Convention, another unforgettable event took place. Excitement was in the air when the delegates heard that Geoffrey Jackson, a member of the Governing Body, would address the audience. And what a surprise when Brother Jackson announced the release of the complete *New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures* in Georgian!

Tears of gratitude welled up in the eyes of many dele-



gates. A sister said: “I cannot put into words the joy that I felt when we received the complete Bible. . . . It was really a historic event.” Over 17,000 people enjoyed this spiritual feast, which marked a milestone in the history of Jehovah’s people in Georgia.

## Persecution Stopped!

Many of us vividly remember alarming reports from Georgia during the years 1999 to 2003. All around the world, countless prayers were offered in behalf of our dear brothers and sisters in Georgia. (Jas. 5:16) How happy our brothers were when the persecution stopped at the end of 2003! Since then, our work in this country has been carried out freely. Our brothers and sisters in Georgia are very grateful for the loving concern and care shown by our brotherhood.—1 Pet. 2:17.





Preaching at the  
cable-car station in Khulo

## “This Is the Heritage of the Servants of Jehovah.”

—Isa. 54:17.

JEHOVAH’S servants in Georgia have tirelessly preached the good news, and Jehovah has blessed their hard work. As a result, the good news has reached almost every corner of the country.

In recent years, though, zealous publishers and pioneers have given more attention to the needs of those living in seldom-worked territories. In mountainous



Top: Publishers getting ready to preach in Ushguli, situated some 7,200 feet above sea level

▲ Publishers in the Svaneti region

► Ana and Temuri Bliadze

areas, some remote villages and hamlets can be reached only by four-wheel-drive vehicles or by cable car.

Each year since 2009, the Georgia branch has provided all congregations with a list of unassigned territories, inviting publishers to support the preaching work in those places. In order to participate in this activity, many have had to make noteworthy sacrifices.

Temuri and Ana Bliadze were newly married when they learned that there was a great need for publishers in the mountainous Ajaria region. They had just bought land to build a new house. But now they had an opportunity to expand their ministry.

They first spent a week in the Ajaria region. Recalling his first impressions, Temuri states: “Local publishers were walking a lot in order to reach small villages. We had a four-wheel-drive van, and I immediately thought that it would be very useful there.”

Ana adds: “Moving was far from easy because we were very attached to our congregation and our family. But we felt Jehovah’s blessing.” For over three years, Temuri and Ana have been supporting a group in Keda, a town in the Ajaria region.

### **Innovative Pioneers**

The help of temporary special pioneers has been invaluable in supporting the preaching work in remote areas. When their assignment ended, many pioneers decided to stay in the area where they were assigned, in order to look after those with whom they had started Bible studies.



Khatuna Kharebashvili and Khatuna Tsulaia in Manglisi

Two pioneer sisters, both named Khatuna, were assigned to the picturesque town of Manglisi. No Witnesses lived there, but the two sisters had a very productive ministry. They conducted 9 Bible studies the first month, 12 the next, 15 the next, and then 18! To continue caring for their Bible students, they decided to stay in Manglisi.

To support themselves financially, our sisters needed to be very innovative. Many who visit Manglisi appreciate a local specialty—a preserve made from pinecones, which is known for having health benefits. So, at first, the sisters collected green pinecones to make the famous preserve, which they sold at the local market. But then they received an unexpected source of income.

One day a Bible student brought them several chicks. She explained that one of her hens had laid eggs in a

hidden place and had brought home the newly hatched chicks. The woman wanted to give her Bible teachers this unexpected addition to her henhouse. One of the sisters had experience in breeding hens, so they decided to support themselves with a small poultry farm.

One of the sisters notes: “With Jehovah’s help and the help of our brothers and Bible students, we were able to stay in Manglisi for five years.” Now there is an active group of brothers and sisters there.

### **Pioneering in a Foreign Language**

In recent years, Georgia has seen a large influx of foreigners. Many pioneers realized that a new field of service was opening up. So they began learning languages such as Arabic, Azerbaijani, Chinese, English, Persian, and Turkish.

While many pioneers have joined foreign-language groups and congregations, others have moved abroad to areas where there is an even greater need. Giorgi and Gela were in their 20’s when they moved to a neighboring country. “We wanted to give our best to Jehovah, and moving there was the perfect opportunity for doing so,” says Giorgi.

Reflecting on his time there, Gela says: “Serving as an elder in such a territory taught me a lot. It is a wonderful feeling when Jehovah uses you to help his ‘little sheep.’”—John 21:17.

Giorgi adds: “There were challenges, but we were focused on our service and did not have any second

thoughts. We felt we were simply doing what we ought to do.”

Another brother, whose name is also Gela, served in Turkey for a few years. He recalls: “In the beginning, while I struggled with the local language, it was challenging to keep my joy. However, when I was finally able to communicate with my brothers and sisters and with the people in the territory, there was no end to my happiness.”

Nino, who has been pioneering in Istanbul, Turkey, for over ten years, expresses her feelings this way: “I felt Jehovah’s support from the very first day after my move. Pioneering in a foreign field allows you to have ‘*Yearbook* experiences’ almost every day.”

### **They Remembered Their Grand Creator**

Many of those we read about on the previous pages are young ones who ‘remembered their Grand Creator in the days of their youth.’ (Eccl. 12:1) In fact, one third of the 3,197 pioneers in Georgia are 25 years of age or younger. Why are so many of these young ones doing well in the truth?

Several factors seem to have contributed to this trend. For one thing, families in Georgia usually enjoy close relationships. Konstantine, who raised five children in the truth, explains: “What attracted me to the truth was the feeling that Jehovah is a loving Father. When I became a father myself, my goal was to help my children feel at ease with me.”

Malkhazi and his wife, who have three children, make earnest efforts to build strong family bonds. He

says: “From time to time, we ask our children to think of what they appreciate about us and their siblings. Then we ask them to share their thoughts at our family worship. As a result, they have learned to see the good in others and appreciate them.”

### **“Now I Have a Truly Fulfilling Life!”**

In support of parental training, elders try to involve young ones in congregation activities as early as possible. Nestori, who was baptized when he was 11 years old, states: “The elders gave me various small assignments from a very early age. This has helped me feel that I’m really part of the congregation.”

Good role models and the support of the elders are vital too. Koba, one of Nestori’s brothers, relates: “Unlike those of my siblings, my teenage years were turbulent. One young elder, who was a good role model for me,



always tried to understand me and was not judgmental. He played a crucial role in my return to Jehovah.”

Today, Nestori and Koba, along with their sister, Mari, serve together in a remote territory. Koba says, “Now I have a truly fulfilling life!”

### **“My Children Go On Walking in the Truth”**

The branch office strives to bolster parents’ efforts to train their children, by involving young Christians in theocratic projects. One Branch Committee member notes: “We cherish our youths, so we try to support them as they strive to achieve their spiritual goals.”

Working and associating closely with mature brothers and sisters makes an unforgettable impression on young ones. Mamuka, who worked alongside international servants on the construction of the Assembly Hall in Tbilisi, says: “Such international projects gave me wonderful opportunities to learn from others. Besides acquiring practical skills, I learned many spiritual lessons.”

Close family relationships, encouragement from the elders, and good role models have had a very positive influence on many young ones in Georgia. Their parents share the feelings of the apostle John, who wrote: “No greater joy do I have than this: that I should hear that my children go on walking in the truth.”—3 John 4.

### **Intensifying Translation Efforts**

In 2013, the Governing Body invited all branches to investigate whether publications might be needed in any of the additional languages spoken within their

branch territory. The purpose was to reach more people with the good news.

Consequently, the Georgia branch decided to translate some publications into Svan and Mingrelian, two languages so closely related to Georgian that some consider them to be dialects.

Zealous pioneers from the Svaneti region wrote: “Svan people have a real interest in spiritual things and deep respect for the Bible. Even those who at first were hesitant to accept our publications were moved to take those that were translated into their mother tongue.”

All Mingrelian-speaking publishers were deeply touched when they started to have meetings in their mother tongue. Giga, a young pioneer, admits: “Now I

Georgian Witnesses worked alongside international servants during the Assembly Hall construction in Tbilisi





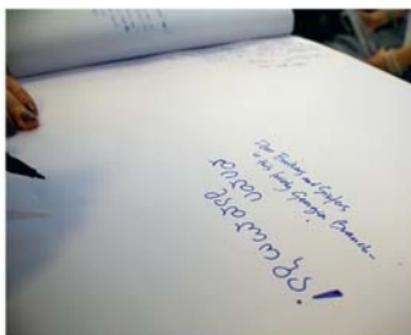
- ▲ Georgia Branch Committee: Wayne Tomchuk, Levani Kopaliani, Joni Shalamberidze, Michael E. Jones
- ▶ Branch dedication in Tbilisi, 2013

can express myself in my own words at the meetings. I don't need to translate thoughts in my mind before giving a comment."

Zuri, an elder in the Mingrelian-speaking congregation in Tkaia, shares his feelings: "There have been many touching moments in my life, both happy and sad, yet they never brought tears to my eyes. But when Kingdom songs in Mingrelian were sung at the meeting for the first time, no one in the audience could hold back tears, including me."

### **Recent Milestones**

A major milestone in the history of the Witnesses in Georgia occurred on Saturday, April 6, 2013, when David Splane of the Governing Body delivered



the dedication talk for a renovated and enlarged branch complex, an Assembly Hall, and a new Bible school facility. Many local Witnesses opened their homes and hearts to the 338 delegates who came from 24 countries.

The next day, Brother Splane delivered a special talk to 15,200, made possible by audio/video tie-in to congregation meeting places throughout the country. This was the largest international theocratic event ever hosted in Georgia. The interchange of encouragement as well as the joy experienced by the brothers and sisters was truly moving. One young brother stated, “Now I know what the new world will be like.”

The Bible School for Christian Couples, now named the School for Kingdom Evangelizers, has proved to be a real blessing for Jehovah’s people in Georgia. Since 2013, over 200 students have graduated. Full of appreciation for the education they have received, the graduates are willing to serve zealously wherever there is a need.

### **“Stretching Forward to the Things Ahead”**

Thanks to the efforts of the courageous early Kingdom proclaimers, the good news has become available to all of Georgia. Their unselfish love for God and neighbor and their faith, courage, and initiative have been richly blessed by Jehovah.

The more than 18,000 brothers and sisters in Georgia are happy to carry on the work of their forerunners and help their neighbors to experience personally the power of God’s Word.—Phil. 3:13; 4:13.



## Kurdish People Respond to the Truth

“I OFTEN tell Jehovah in prayer how grateful I am that I was able to hear about him in my mother tongue,” says Gulizar.

Gulizar associated with Jehovah’s Witnesses for eight years, but she was baptized only after attending meetings in her mother tongue, Kurdish. She is one of the many Kurds who have responded to the truth in Georgia in recent years. But who are the Kurds?

Kurdish people have inhabited the Middle East for centuries. Some scholars think that they are descendants of the

ancient Medes mentioned in the Bible. (2 Ki. 18:11; Acts 2:9) Their language belongs to the Iranian group of languages.

Today, millions of Kurds live in various countries, including Armenia, Iran, Iraq, Syria, and Turkey. There are about 20,000 Kurds in Georgia. Generally, they are God-fearing and have high respect for spiritual matters.

There are now 500 Kurdish publishers in Georgia, and three Kurdish-language congregations. In 2014, to the great joy of all, the first regional convention in Kurdish was held in Tbilisi, hosting delegates from Armenia, Germany, Turkey, and Ukraine.





## Love Transcends Man-Made Boundaries

LONG before little Sanel was born, doctors informed her parents that if she survived birth, she would have serious health problems. From the very first day of her life, she needed surgery. Her parents, who lived in Abkhazia—a region that had declared independence from Georgia—were unable to find a surgeon who would operate on Sanel without administering blood.

The parents contacted the local Hospital Liaison Committee (HLC).<sup>\*</sup> To their great relief, brothers on the HLC quickly found a cooperative surgeon in Tbilisi, the capital of Georgia. But Sanel's mother had not yet fully recovered from the delivery and could not travel. So it was decided that Sanel's grandmothers, both of whom were Witnesses, would take the baby girl to the hospital in Tbilisi.

The delicate operation was successful. Shortly afterward, the grandmothers wrote: “We stayed in the hospital for over 20 days. During that time, many Georgian brothers and sisters visited us and offered us help. Many expressed their sympathy. We had read about the love shown by our brotherhood, but now we have experienced it in a very personal way.”

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<sup>\*</sup> In Georgia, elders serving on HLCs have established contact with over 250 surgeons who agree to perform bloodless surgery.



## ONE HUNDRED YEARS AGO

# 1917

“THE new year dawns amidst great strife, turmoil and bloodshed,” stated *The Watch Tower* of January 1, 1917. Yes, World War I, the global slaughter known then as the Great War, continued to rage unabated in Europe.

Even though the Bible Students did not then completely understand what is involved in true Christian neutrality, many of them made commendable efforts to avoid blood-guilt. For instance, in England, 19-year-old Stanley Willis was determined to remain neutral. Before going on trial for

his stand, he wrote: "I feel it a great privilege to be permitted to bear this witness. The Colonel told me this morning that I shall be ordered to don the King's uniform, and if I refuse, I shall be court-martialed."

When Stanley refused to compromise, he was sentenced to hard labor in prison. Nevertheless, he kept a positive outlook. Two months later, he wrote: "By the 'spirit of power' which the Truth gives, one is enabled to bear patiently . . . things which are much harder for others to bear." He used his time in prison wisely and stated: "One of the greatest blessings obtained from these recent trials is the privilege of having a fair amount of *quiet* for prayer, meditation and study."

Before long, the United States formally joined the conflict. In a speech delivered to the United States Congress on April 2, 1917, President Woodrow Wilson called for a formal declaration of war on Germany. Four days later, the United States entered the war. Christians in the United States soon faced the issue of neutrality.

To fill the immediate need for soldiers, the United States enacted the Selective Service Act in May. One month later, the Espionage Act was enacted. The former made it possible for the U.S. government to draft thousands of men into the war effort, and the latter made it a crime to interfere with those efforts. Before long, enemies of the truth used this legislation to 'frame trouble in the name of the law' for Jehovah's peace-loving worshippers.—Ps. 94:20.

Turmoil in a world at war came as no surprise to the Bible Students. For decades they had been calling attention to Bible prophecies that foretold such conditions. However, many were surprised by the controversy that soon erupted among some of Jehovah's people.

## Testing and Sifting

In the United States, trouble began not long after Charles Taze Russell died. At issue was how the affairs of Jehovah's servants would be administered. Brother Russell had incorporated Zion's Watch Tower Tract Society in 1884 and served as the president of this legal corporation until his death in October 1916. When Joseph F. Rutherford began taking the lead, a few prominent men in the organization, including four who were on the board of directors, exhibited an ambitious spirit.

These four, along with several others, did not like the way Brother Rutherford directed matters. One of the issues concerned the work of Paul S. L. Johnson, who served as a pilgrim, or traveling overseer.

Shortly before Brother Russell died, he had arranged to send Johnson to England as one of the organization's traveling representatives. There, Johnson was to preach the good news, visit the congregations, and provide a report on the work in that territory. When he arrived in November 1916, the brothers in England welcomed him warmly. Sadly, the adulation he received began to warp his judgment, and he became convinced that he should be Brother Russell's successor.

Without authority, Johnson dismissed some Bethel family members in England who opposed him. He also tried to seize control of the organization's bank account in London, at which point Brother Rutherford recalled him to the United States.

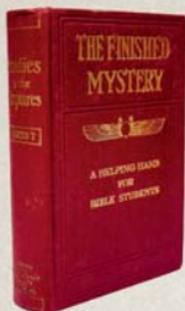
Johnson returned to Brooklyn, but instead of humbly accepting the correction he had been given, he repeatedly tried to persuade Brother Rutherford to let him return to England to continue his work there. Failing in this endeavor, Johnson tried to influence the board of directors, four of whom sided with him.

Anticipating that these men would try to seize the organization's funds in the United States, as Johnson had attempted to do in England, Brother Rutherford acted to remove them from the board of directors. The law required that each member of the board of directors be elected annually by members of the corporation. However, at the annual meeting of the corporation on January 6, 1917, only three members of the board, Joseph F. Rutherford, Andrew N. Pierson, and William E. Van Amburgh, were elected. They filled the positions of president, vice president, and secretary-treasurer, respectively. No election was held for the remaining four positions on the board of directors. The men who had held those positions, the four opposers, had been elected to the board in the past, and it was understood by some that they would hold those positions for life. However, because they had not been reelected at the annual meeting, they were actually not legal members of the board at all! So in July 1917, Brother Rutherford exercised his right to appoint four faithful men to fill the vacant board positions.

As can be expected, the four ousted directors were furious and began a campaign to reestablish their positions. But they failed. While some Bible Students sided with them and formed other organizations, the vast majority of the Bible Students stayed faithful, and the four did not regain their positions on the board of directors.

### **Advancement Despite Adversity**

During this time, Brother Rutherford and the other loyal brothers at Bethel continued to work for the advancement of Kingdom interests. The number of traveling overseers, known then as pilgrims, was increased from 69 to 93. The number of colporteurs, or regular pioneers, increased from 372 to 461. Additionally, for the first time, special



colporteurs, similar to modern-day auxiliary pioneers, were appointed. Some congregations had as many as 100 of those zealous workers.

July 17, 1917, saw the release of a new book, *The Finished Mystery*. By the end of the year, supplies of the book were exhausted and 850,000 more copies were ordered from the firm that printed our literature.\*

The reorganization of the work at Bethel that had been started by Brother Russell in 1916 was completed in 1917. In December of that year, *The Watch Tower* reported: “The reorganization of the Office force . . . was completed and is now moving with a smoothness and efficiency that should characterize any well-managed institution . . . The members of the Office force realize that it is a privilege and not a right to be in the Office.”

In September 1917, *The Watch Tower* noted: “Since January 1 every month has shown an increase [in literature output] over the corresponding month of the year 1916 . . . This seems to us very strong evidence that the blessing of the Lord has been resting upon the work centered here at Brooklyn.”

## Testing and Sifting Not Complete

The opposers had been cleaned out of the organization, and the results of a referendum of the congregations, which were published in *The Watch Tower*, showed that the vast majority of the brothers supported Brother Rutherford and the faithful men at Bethel. But the testing of these men was not complete. Although 1918 began on a positive note, it would herald the darkest hour in our modern-day history.

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\* Until 1920, all our printing was handled by commercial firms.

# 2016 Grand Totals

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Branches of Jehovah's Witnesses:	89
Number of Lands Reporting:	240
Total Congregations:	119,485
Worldwide Memorial Attendance:	20,085,142
Memorial Partakers Worldwide:	18,013
Peak of Publishers in Kingdom Service:	8,340,847
Average Publishers Preaching Each Month:	8,132,358
Percentage of Increase Over 2015:	1.8
Total Number Baptized:	264,535
Average Auxiliary Pioneer Publishers Each Month:	459,393
Average Pioneer Publishers Each Month:	1,157,017
Total Hours Spent in Field:	1,983,763,754
Average Bible Studies Each Month:	10,115,264

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During the 2016 service year, Jehovah's Witnesses spent over \$213 million in caring for special pioneers, missionaries, and circuit overseers in their field service assignments. ■ Worldwide, a total of 19,818 ordained ministers staff the branch facilities. All are members of the Worldwide Order of Special Full-Time Servants of Jehovah's Witnesses.

# 2016 Service Year Report of Jehovah's Witnesses Worldwide

Country or Territory	Population	2016 Peak Pubs.	Ratio, 1 Publisher to	2016 Av. Pubs.	% Inc. Over 2015
Albania (D-11)	3,204,000	5,574	575	5,487	2
American Samoa (N-26)	54,194	210	258	202	-7
Andorra (F-4)	72,040	174	414	164	-4
Angola (N-6)	25,789,024	128,057	201	121,306	9
Anguilla (O-32)	14,760	70	211	61	-2
Antigua (P-32)	92,740	489	190	463	
Argentina (N-36)	43,416,755	150,052	289	148,062	
Armenia (G-9)	2,998,600	11,178	268	10,999	
Aruba (Q-29)	104,263	1,058	99	1,019	7
Australia (O-19)	24,224,401	67,418	359	66,689	
Austria (F-5)	8,699,730	21,561	403	21,353	1
Azerbaijan (G-9)	9,826,397	1,406	6,989	1,357	4
Azores (G-1)	245,766	742	331	727	
Bahamas (G-35)	392,718	1,800	218	1,652	1
Bangladesh (J-14)	160,995,642	282	570,907	271	12
Barbados (Q-33)	285,000	2,542	112	2,513	
Belarus (E-7)	9,496,000	5,903	1,609	5,854	
Belgium (E-4)	11,267,910	25,437	443	24,818	1
Belize (H-33)	367,500	2,702	136	2,555	2
Benin (L-4)	11,241,706	12,759	881	12,012	3
Bermuda (F-36)	61,662	498	124	444	-1
Bolivia (M-36)	10,725,000	26,081	411	25,457	3
Bonaire (Q-30)	18,000	148	122	135	14
Bosnia and Herzegovina (C-10)	3,810,000	1,160	3,284	1,146	-2
Botswana (O-6)	2,262,000	2,181	1,037	2,109	
Brazil (L-37)	206,482,887	829,743	249	808,710	3
Britain (E-3)	65,111,143	138,261	471	134,517	
Bulgaria (F-7)	7,186,893	2,408	2,985	2,376	4
Burkina Faso (K-3)	18,759,039	1,776	10,563	1,653	
Burundi (M-7)	9,396,000	13,595	691	12,957	3
Cambodia (K-16)	15,577,899	1,021	15,257	986	10
Cameroon (L-5)	24,071,647	41,721	577	38,373	1
Canada (C-31)	36,401,079	115,006	317	113,954	
Cape Verde (K-1)	527,877	2,206	239	2,141	2
Cayman Islands (H-34)	60,764	253	240	237	9
Central African Republic (L-6)	4,900,000	2,547	1,924	2,525	-1
Chad (K-6)	14,037,000	769	18,254	705	3
Chile (M-35)	18,191,884	76,915	237	75,622	1
Chuuk (L-21)	48,651	82	593	43	16
Colombia (J-35)	49,953,000	171,146	292	167,960	2

Letter and number following each country's name indicates the country's location on maps following this chart.

2015 Av. Pubs.	2016 No. Bptzd.	Av. Aux. Pio. Pubs.	Av. Pio. Pubs.	No. of Congs.	Total Hours	Av. Bible Studies	Memorial Attendance
5,381	270	534	1,268	89	1,923,463	5,994	11,562
218	11	12	34	3	61,815	345	708
170		6	20	3	34,558	111	354
111,123	9,549	7,462	15,165	1,725	35,715,951	595,961	564,070
62	1	5	6	2	16,125	139	313
462	15	26	48	7	98,694	605	1,364
147,379	4,199	9,696	20,510	2,012	35,119,818	124,274	309,964
11,019	433	949	2,176	133	3,322,154	7,296	23,512
953	51	54	74	14	185,198	1,102	2,840
66,753	1,235	3,297	5,667	793	12,056,551	30,230	116,596
21,216	480	1,148	1,549	299	3,910,400	12,766	35,731
1,303	69	122	347	13	510,770	1,798	2,911
730	15	45	86	15	171,210	792	1,663
1,630	56	92	216	27	395,054	2,186	4,739
243	10	16	120	6	131,347	643	969
2,506	41	141	203	30	458,445	2,259	6,012
5,828	158	496	1,239	78	1,880,259	4,859	10,231
24,661	485	1,331	1,679	354	4,253,779	11,715	42,991
2,515	91	141	484	62	731,615	4,238	8,734
11,716	456	712	1,622	192	3,394,013	30,432	42,162
448	12	17	94	5	117,948	327	945
24,836	1,140	2,287	5,093	332	8,265,115	42,568	75,027
118		9	11	2	26,902	180	358
1,170	24	89	185	16	325,340	517	1,883
2,099	102	137	266	44	563,924	4,460	6,438
787,470	32,978	47,815	91,983	11,911	182,262,093	916,992	1,799,512
134,491	2,309	6,728	13,240	1,613	24,823,570	61,280	226,750
2,290	60	149	661	55	890,343	3,182	5,454
1,656	45	97	277	44	497,699	3,356	5,349
12,577	864	1,075	2,016	270	4,242,272	40,291	51,587
894	26	43	558	14	525,885	2,524	2,790
37,869	1,426	1,875	4,442	399	9,570,133	74,239	97,036
114,123	1,678	6,688	12,166	1,409	23,093,041	55,780	184,604
2,098	92	137	407	33	634,389	4,729	7,647
217	10	14	23	3	52,720	243	645
2,544	139	132	312	53	682,787	8,098	17,337
687	38	32	69	18	174,556	1,423	4,659
75,168	2,090	5,136	11,814	979	19,944,023	62,656	174,925
37	3	5	12	2	19,420	162	232
165,089	8,168	9,001	24,233	2,572	42,596,832	219,223	500,548

Country or Territory	Population	2016 Peak Pubs.	Ratio, 1 Publisher to	2016 Av. Pubs.	% Inc. Over 2015
Congo, Dem. Republic of (M-6)	79,722,624	215,449	370	214,736	22
Congo, Republic of (M-5)	4,740,992	6,576	721	6,314	4
Cook Islands (O-26)	14,974	195	77	188	-3
Costa Rica (J-34)	4,861,300	30,593	159	29,973	1
Côte d'Ivoire (L-3)	23,842,311	11,133	2,142	10,620	3
Croatia (B-9)	4,240,000	5,335	795	5,264	-2
Cuba (G-34)	11,412,918	95,843	119	95,443	
Curaçao (Q-30)	158,635	2,063	77	2,025	2
Cyprus (H-7)	885,600	2,584	343	2,563	1
Czech Republic (E-5)	10,564,866	15,594	677	15,490	
Denmark (D-4)	5,669,000	14,719	385	14,622	
Dominica (P-33)	73,000	437	167	421	-4
Dominican Republic (O-29)	10,606,865	37,704	281	36,949	
Ecuador (K-34)	16,528,730	90,110	183	88,636	4
El Salvador (H-33)	6,148,000	41,084	150	39,851	1
Equatorial Guinea (L-5)	875,609	1,850	473	1,714	4
Estonia (D-6)	1,315,944	4,065	324	4,031	-1
Ethiopia (L-8)	99,391,000	10,277	9,671	10,116	1
Falkland Islands (Q-37)	2,912	12	243	11	
Faroe Islands (C-2)	48,000	134	358	129	15
Fiji (N-24)	897,537	3,098	290	2,881	-3
Finland (C-7)	5,487,308	18,477	297	18,397	-1
France (F-4)	64,500,000	128,759	501	127,087	1
French Guiana (J-37)	244,118	2,515	97	2,472	4
Gabon (M-5)	1,772,682	4,090	433	3,996	1
Gambia (K-2)	2,056,352	262	7,849	220	-4
Georgia (G-9)	3,720,400	18,619	200	18,216	
Germany (E-5)	82,175,684	165,624	496	164,243	
Ghana (L-3)	28,188,439	133,607	211	128,258	3
Gibraltar (G-3)	32,259	134	241	124	-2
Greece (G-6)	10,787,690	28,715	376	28,537	
Greenland (A-38)	56,000	169	331	161	11
Grenada (Q-32)	107,327	565	190	542	-6
Guadeloupe (P-32)	409,055	8,208	50	8,046	
Guam (K-20)	159,358	736	217	705	-5
Guatemala (H-33)	16,700,400	39,976	418	38,822	2
Guinea (K-2)	12,947,122	857	15,107	810	6
Guinea-Bissau (K-2)	1,890,111	163	11,596	149	6
Guyana (J-37)	767,085	3,100	247	3,016	3
Haiti (O-28)	9,993,000	20,554	486	19,754	1
Honduras (H-33)	8,199,000	23,565	348	22,908	1
Hong Kong (J-17)	7,346,700	5,563	1,321	5,429	-1
Hungary (A-10)	9,821,000	22,231	442	22,035	-2
Iceland (B-1)	329,000	398	827	368	

2015 Av. Pubs.	2016 No. Bptzd.	Av. Aux. Pio. Pubs.	Av. Pio. Pubs.	No. of Cong.	Total Hours	Av. Bible Studies	Memorial Attendance
176,585	15,295	8,619	21,616	3,746	50,476,012	672,726	1,199,216
6,080	400	443	494	78	1,651,784	23,282	22,598
194	2	8	22	3	38,064	182	450
29,601	754	1,381	3,405	437	6,503,760	33,356	70,324
10,302	511	705	1,624	317	3,222,371	28,274	76,526
5,372	55	316	473	64	1,059,476	2,123	8,434
95,825	2,948	6,246	9,675	1,555	18,470,042	162,918	223,336
1,987	65	113	194	26	399,992	2,369	5,488
2,536	76	168	424	41	651,262	1,821	4,873
15,471	261	829	1,140	222	2,702,528	7,411	26,656
14,564	226	764	953	179	2,480,939	6,054	21,779
437	3	16	72	10	112,674	716	1,646
36,946	1,397	2,193	7,239	583	11,126,734	65,742	120,779
85,468	3,708	6,616	14,745	1,036	25,242,354	148,637	274,593
39,643	791	2,020	5,415	684	9,170,198	42,813	92,606
1,653	115	104	212	16	511,110	6,223	7,353
4,074	58	228	504	55	832,958	2,563	6,464
10,013	452	605	2,352	220	3,321,666	7,494	25,150
11		1		1	1,604	10	19
112		8	35	4	38,710	120	203
2,958	20	130	493	79	724,603	4,513	11,821
18,496	253	726	2,033	300	2,985,976	10,099	26,061
125,519	2,669	8,062	14,482	1,714	28,288,090	61,531	223,556
2,373	124	169	386	49	703,251	5,788	9,975
3,972	177	239	543	42	1,151,130	8,795	12,478
230	13	14	36	4	66,341	441	639
18,279	501	1,121	3,216	231	4,526,935	8,306	32,216
163,871	3,224	7,590	12,721	2,159	29,326,324	81,494	274,379
124,004	6,069	5,153	14,009	1,941	31,688,587	420,286	354,966
127	2	10	21	2	33,158	47	185
28,592	651	1,679	4,086	389	6,591,317	12,838	47,027
145	8	10	31	5	39,889	156	317
579	12	22	69	10	118,842	609	1,524
8,058	268	440	664	120	1,542,356	8,681	19,475
740	25	48	122	9	194,696	1,032	1,858
38,140	517	2,225	5,857	893	10,054,759	50,743	98,074
765	44	39	120	20	238,258	2,091	3,554
141	9	17	37	3	70,825	589	702
2,941	105	177	442	48	737,749	5,314	12,456
19,552	1,055	1,140	2,833	280	5,329,374	42,128	86,256
22,653	474	1,253	4,244	442	6,718,127	34,528	67,271
5,509	171	397	1,027	59	1,660,060	5,903	9,508
22,400	490	1,291	1,917	297	4,477,362	11,631	39,543
367	4	24	52	6	82,962	251	675

Country or Territory	Population	2016 Peak Pubs.	Ratio, 1 Publisher to	2016 Av. Pubs.	% Inc. Over 2015
India (J-12)	1,330,713,000	44,861	29,663	43,910	5
Indonesia (M-17)	258,316,051	26,741	9,660	25,967	2
Ireland (E-2)	4,713,993	6,585	716	6,407	2
Israel (H-8)	8,751,200	1,604	5,456	1,564	4
Italy (G-5)	60,665,551	251,092	242	250,249	
Jamaica (H-34)	2,803,362	11,714	239	11,539	-2
Japan (G-19)	126,573,481	214,173	591	213,818	
Kazakhstan (F-11)	17,670,579	17,725	997	17,521	
Kenya (M-8)	47,528,480	26,886	1,768	26,582	
Kiribati (M-24)	114,405	146	784	134	-1
Korea, Republic of (G-18)	50,504,000	99,962	505	99,724	
Kosovo (D-11)	2,350,000	257	9,144	247	5
Kosrae (L-22)	6,616	28	236	20	
Kyrgyzstan (G-12)	6,019,500	5,178	1,163	5,124	1
Latvia (D-6)	1,939,050	2,290	847	2,249	-1
Lebanon (H-8)	6,023,372	3,684	1,635	3,641	-1
Lesotho (P-7)	2,135,000	4,019	531	3,958	3
Liberia (L-2)	4,615,222	7,137	647	6,332	4
Liechtenstein (F-4)	37,623	89	423	85	
Lithuania (D-6)	2,862,786	3,079	930	3,042	-2
Luxembourg (E-4)	583,189	2,108	277	2,082	2
Macao (J-17)	652,500	329	1,983	289	-2
Macedonia (D-11)	2,078,453	1,310	1,587	1,289	
Madagascar (O-9)	24,915,822	33,529	743	31,845	3
Madeira (H-1)	256,424	1,138	225	1,116	-3
Malawi (N-8)	17,885,806	89,299	200	88,810	10
Malaysia (L-16)	30,700,000	5,055	6,073	4,936	3
Mali (K-3)	18,145,967	322	56,354	293	3
Malta (G-5)	419,000	747	561	694	4
Marshall Islands (L-23)	69,747	211	331	176	-4
Martinique (P-32)	396,909	4,794	83	4,744	
Mauritius (O-10)	1,277,459	1,869	683	1,832	3
Mayotte (N-9)	236,507	162	1,460	156	6
Mexico (G-31)	128,766,500	859,541	150	829,793	1
Moldova (F-7)	4,069,000	19,800	206	19,653	-1
Mongolia (F-15)	2,959,134	473	6,256	448	3
Montenegro (D-10)	631,490	264	2,392	258	-4
Montserrat (P-32)	5,154	21	245	20	5
Mozambique (O-7)	28,947,073	56,192	515	54,455	3
Myanmar (J-15)	54,479,161	4,211	12,937	4,139	1
Namibia (O-5)	2,459,000	2,448	1,004	2,310	3
Nauru (M-23)	10,263	19	540	15	36
Nepal (H-13)	28,441,000	2,367	12,016	2,322	5
Netherlands (E-4)	17,054,563	29,839	572	29,490	

2015 Av. Pubs.	2016 No. Bptzd.	Av. Aux. Plo. Pubs.	Av. Pio. Pubs.	No. of Cong.	Total Hours	Av. Bible Studies	Memorial Attendance
41,866	2,618	3,231	6,869	624	10,581,267	57,586	124,547
25,361	1,038	2,141	3,662	477	6,940,378	32,731	56,404
6,281	65	348	935	119	1,463,718	3,647	12,077
1,511	55	90	241	27	402,781	1,322	3,430
250,277	4,915	19,097	33,733	2,976	60,708,456	118,676	438,412
11,815	301	491	1,480	187	2,364,291	13,164	33,968
214,523	2,156	20,821	64,864	3,059	81,414,691	160,289	300,963
17,545	526	1,376	3,617	256	5,393,751	12,446	32,067
26,578	659	1,094	3,524	632	6,802,044	47,307	67,173
136	8	7	33	4	46,660	273	349
99,950	1,893	9,546	40,069	1,331	46,602,013	77,592	135,398
236	7	12	98	7	120,065	482	548
20		3	5	1	8,236	56	107
5,071	209	453	1,096	69	1,599,886	5,182	10,833
2,275	46	131	349	36	559,498	1,952	3,519
3,671	68	181	192	57	577,280	2,115	6,458
3,837	254	154	451	89	932,795	7,123	11,062
6,112	341	238	712	133	1,720,634	21,963	45,809
85	2	2	2	1	9,194	38	141
3,101	61	179	458	46	754,242	2,496	4,991
2,042	15	126	144	32	389,003	1,147	3,996
294	16	12	78	5	106,909	329	717
1,293	38	105	190	24	347,501	1,002	2,856
30,941	1,966	1,630	5,490	718	9,363,947	80,595	138,470
1,147	21	72	101	17	235,860	759	1,812
80,776	7,072	3,198	7,138	1,520	17,009,981	132,375	291,106
4,804	231	308	1,298	113	1,702,752	8,755	13,330
284	12	20	52	7	97,772	727	1,118
665	20	40	86	8	139,350	262	1,210
183	6	11	31	4	49,004	458	870
4,755	152	280	577	66	1,093,014	5,165	10,662
1,785	62	105	197	25	388,876	2,209	4,414
147	2	13	43	3	58,503	381	388
818,481	17,190	36,977	134,370	13,237	204,966,555	1,018,240	2,262,646
19,776	562	1,302	2,232	242	4,228,530	13,800	37,091
435	21	33	189	9	206,228	830	1,297
270	3	30	55	6	95,463	167	541
19		2	10	1	10,751	82	124
53,027	1,390	2,023	5,019	1,175	11,323,585	101,379	223,543
4,099	97	116	612	76	851,328	4,106	8,847
2,247	128	129	261	44	578,848	4,494	8,239
11		1	1	1	3,659	32	130
2,204	112	143	802	36	880,086	4,833	7,261
29,508	562	1,422	1,784	362	4,786,042	12,802	51,404

Country or Territory	Population	2016 Peak Pubs.	Ratio, 1 Publisher to	2016 Av. Pubs.	% Inc. Over 2015
Nevis (P-32)	12,000	74	162	65	16
New Caledonia (O-23)	275,202	2,333	118	2,252	4
New Zealand (Q-24)	4,718,126	14,242	331	13,895	
Nicaragua (H-33)	6,155,700	28,642	215	27,651	2
Niger (K-4)	20,860,548	292	71,440	274	1
Nigeria (L-4)	182,202,000	370,336	492	342,122	1
Niue (O-26)	1,190	24	50	23	-4
Norfolk Island (P-23)	1,796	6	299	6	20
Norway (C-4)	5,211,000	11,664	447	11,535	1
Pakistan (H-12)	192,826,502	1,034	186,486	975	2
Palau (L-19)	21,108	79	267	75	-6
Palestinian Territory (H-8)	4,810,000	78	61,667	73	3
Panama (J-34)	3,995,500	17,193	232	16,529	2
Papua New Guinea (M-20)	7,708,577	4,586	1,681	4,112	5
Paraguay (M-37)	6,750,721	10,207	661	9,982	3
Peru (L-35)	31,826,018	127,855	249	121,991	1
Philippines (K-18)	100,981,437	209,131	483	202,431	1
Pohnpei (L-22)	35,981	75	480	70	1
Poland (E-6)	38,437,239	119,932	320	118,947	-2
Portugal (G-2)	9,839,140	48,999	201	48,484	
Puerto Rico (O-31)	3,680,772	25,579	144	25,269	-1
Réunion (O-10)	861,984	3,160	273	3,087	4
Rodrigues (O-11)	41,669	50	833	43	-10
Romania (F-6)	21,136,000	40,398	523	40,151	-1
Rota (K-20)	2,477	11	225	9	
Russia (C-15)	146,074,524	171,828	850	170,415	-1
Rwanda (M-7)	11,533,446	27,759	415	26,229	5
Saba (O-32)	1,800	12	150	9	-25
St. Barthélemy (O-32)	9,503	30	317	27	4
St. Eustatius (P-32)	4,020	29	139	25	14
St. Helena (N-3)	4,000	121	33	116	-2
St. Kitts (O-32)	44,183	211	209	200	-1
St. Lucia (Q-33)	186,383	778	240	739	2
St. Maarten (O-32)	39,540	339	117	325	-4
St. Martin (O-32)	36,457	322	113	297	-5
St. Pierre and Miquelon (D-37)	6,286	14	449	13	-7
St. Vincent & the Grenadines (Q-32)	109,645	345	318	328	-2
Saipan (K-20)	48,200	211	228	200	3
Samoa (N-25)	194,899	548	356	510	-2
San Marino (F-5)	33,121	195	170	193	-4
São Tomé and Príncipe (M-4)	195,364	810	241	778	3
Senegal (K-2)	15,604,407	1,263	12,355	1,205	3
Serbia (C-11)	8,118,146	3,894	2,085	3,855	
Seychelles (M-9)	92,430	337	274	324	-3

2015 Av. Pubs.	2016 No. Bptzd.	Av. Aux. Pio. Pubs.	Av. Pio. Pubs.	No. of Cong.	Total Hours	Av. Bible Studies	Memorial Attendance
56		1	3	1	8,571	73	243
2,164	100	173	199	33	508,312	3,167	7,198
13,929	311	725	1,249	186	2,596,600	8,389	26,527
27,054	789	1,382	4,139	485	7,064,669	42,298	88,308
272	9	13	40	7	76,998	388	957
338,955	12,204	12,914	37,746	6,430	75,202,806	870,185	774,874
24		1	3	1	3,965	20	70
5				1	599	3	16
11,472	233	604	980	168	2,007,497	5,654	18,165
960	45	37	105	19	187,704	1,205	4,392
80		7	15	2	25,118	181	220
71		5	10	2	14,987	64	190
16,224	401	927	2,781	317	4,336,896	23,314	50,177
3,916	186	201	485	109	1,025,985	7,865	35,593
9,719	389	590	1,683	227	2,768,541	15,344	23,452
120,260	4,838	9,214	27,771	1,448	40,081,539	193,536	358,596
199,551	8,900	9,801	41,182	3,315	50,130,621	269,655	584,685
69	4	5	21	1	22,786	164	235
121,018	1,740	6,225	7,720	1,305	18,988,899	50,479	190,613
48,633	1,016	3,077	4,394	647	9,911,399	26,864	88,538
25,585	651	1,493	3,628	323	5,918,513	15,565	53,241
2,980	85	200	371	38	734,891	2,438	6,565
48	2	3	5	1	9,450	55	105
40,370	798	2,073	3,809	547	7,692,179	24,533	79,150
9	1	1	4	1	3,992	12	25
172,977	4,002	11,844	29,665	2,315	46,559,507	107,312	293,933
25,061	1,870	2,298	4,856	598	9,796,307	69,889	85,493
12		1	3		3,549	26	43
26		3	6	1	9,863	31	91
22		1	3	1	6,339	40	93
118	3	2		3	10,182	65	269
203	2	7	29	4	48,186	260	685
727	17	46	105	11	199,855	1,225	2,208
340	11	18	31	5	75,737	462	1,247
313	5	15	26	5	64,865	480	1,078
14		1	5	1	5,188	7	19
336	2	25	45	8	93,662	519	1,105
194	8	18	37	3	61,811	369	511
519	27	37	84	12	153,054	873	2,272
202		18	27	2	54,873	96	313
754	29	69	143	11	283,089	3,135	3,277
1,168	45	84	156	25	334,309	2,069	2,859
3,861	80	292	618	63	1,067,776	2,419	8,381
333	6	11	47	4	78,824	406	893

Country or Territory	Population	2016 Peak Pubs.	Ratio, 1 Publisher to	2016 Av. Pubs.	% Inc. Over 2015
Sierra Leone (L-2)	6,592,102	2,214	2,977	2,071	2
Slovakia (F-6)	5,427,917	11,441	474	11,321	
Slovenia (B-8)	2,068,000	1,905	1,086	1,889	-1
Solomon Islands (M-22)	596,109	2,039	292	1,935	1
South Africa (P-6)	54,490,000	102,606	531	99,249	3
South Sudan (L-7)	12,822,840	1,232	10,408	1,179	-3
Spain (G-3)	46,025,318	112,455	409	110,393	1
Sri Lanka (L-13)	20,810,816	5,969	3,486	5,915	2
Sudan (K-7)	41,394,024	624	66,337	624	5
Suriname (J-37)	540,000	2,982	181	2,919	2
Swaziland (P-7)	1,287,000	3,217	400	3,106	1
Sweden (B-6)	9,779,000	22,430	436	22,238	
Switzerland (F-4)	8,327,126	19,327	431	18,838	1
Tahiti (M-27)	268,207	3,206	84	3,162	3
Taiwan (J-17)	23,510,000	10,126	2,322	9,941	4
Tanzania (M-8)	55,538,635	16,989	3,269	16,335	1
Thailand (K-15)	68,200,800	4,574	14,911	4,493	6
Timor-Leste (N-18)	1,167,242	340	3,433	318	12
Tinian (K-20)	2,500	23	109	17	13
Togo (L-4)	7,544,879	20,157	374	19,558	3
Tonga (O-25)	106,326	235	452	197	-5
Trinidad & Tobago (R-33)	1,360,088	9,675	141	9,635	1
Turkey (G-8)	79,000,000	2,829	27,925	2,727	8
Turks and Caicos (N-29)	34,904	330	106	316	-5
Tuvalu (M-24)	9,943	73	136	52	-19
Uganda (L-7)	36,893,477	7,266	5,078	7,095	4
Ukraine (E-7)	42,480,549	141,846	299	140,356	-1
United States of America (E-32)	324,118,787	1,231,609	263	1,198,026	
Uruguay (O-37)	3,423,787	11,786	290	11,634	
Vanuatu (N-23)	270,470	717	377	624	12
Venezuela (J-36)	31,028,637	147,680	210	144,003	4
Virgin Islands, British (O-31)	30,659	256	120	245	-4
Virgin Islands, U.S. (O-31)	106,415	619	172	571	-3
Wallis & Futuna Islands (N-25)	11,504	43	268	37	-16
Yap (L-19)	11,376	29	392	27	-4
Zambia (N-7)	15,933,883	183,586	87	181,568	6
Zimbabwe (O-7)	15,764,255	45,640	345	44,574	3
<b>31 Other Lands</b>		41,775		40,167	12.2
<b>Grand Total (240 Lands)</b>		<b>8,340,847</b>		<b>8,132,358</b>	<b>1.8</b>

2015 Av. Pubs.	2016 No. Bptzd.	Av. Aux. Pio. Pubs.	Av. Pio. Pubs.	No. of Cong.	Total Hours	Av. Bible Studies	Memorial Attendance
2,037	125	105	249	39	554,424	5,201	10,079
11,276	223	588	915	140	1,981,997	4,521	21,547
1,911	34	115	233	30	444,607	1,058	2,977
1,915	78	52	267	52	402,045	2,346	10,044
96,631	6,000	4,842	12,160	2,105	23,113,503	150,734	273,686
1,218	5	63	173	35	304,478	3,169	5,042
109,457	2,199	8,253	14,710	1,502	28,069,429	55,903	190,976
5,775	251	340	809	108	1,308,806	8,411	15,790
595	27	43	80	16	176,691	1,653	2,485
2,849	107	259	307	55	694,247	5,675	10,040
3,063	164	134	277	87	686,618	4,890	8,953
22,236	286	1,118	2,200	310	3,900,229	10,586	35,476
18,611	352	945	1,105	275	3,094,837	9,788	32,819
3,079	155	245	482	46	853,180	4,307	9,721
9,582	240	845	3,323	147	4,105,237	14,617	19,558
16,129	345	604	1,861	477	3,929,723	34,592	55,136
4,258	221	310	1,553	109	1,805,943	6,927	9,986
284	22	23	69	4	109,950	607	919
15		1	3	1	4,619	27	47
19,067	929	1,303	1,990	293	5,268,781	62,762	66,727
208	7	9	27	3	39,814	249	593
9,543	258	678	1,196	126	2,032,071	11,445	24,459
2,514	108	184	494	38	796,130	1,806	4,960
332	8	15	56	6	89,733	660	1,020
64		1	3	1	8,045	69	214
6,832	420	505	1,063	147	2,179,161	20,302	23,920
141,364	3,440	10,168	19,444	1,578	34,329,925	80,903	242,086
1,195,081	28,588	60,951	168,318	14,040	273,517,480	747,554	2,495,181
11,614	332	617	1,057	157	2,196,785	9,439	24,403
557	33	39	78	14	158,377	1,509	3,327
138,860	7,247	11,054	28,953	1,849	44,458,254	210,632	467,611
256	0	14	30	4	59,192	241	846
586	17	32	90	10	147,505	551	1,706
44		1	3	1	8,129	68	185
28	1	2	10	1	13,196	101	145
171,167	10,471	5,565	14,469	2,972	36,329,176	415,706	782,527
43,361	3,339	2,613	5,874	1,242	11,942,197	107,706	116,011
35,798	1,963	3,492	15,297	907	19,457,900	73,443	82,546
<b>7,987,279</b>	<b>264,535</b>	<b>459,393</b>	<b>1,157,017</b>	<b>119,485</b>	<b>1,983,763,754</b>	<b>10,115,264</b>	<b>20,085,142</b>



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# My 2017 Service Report

	Placements (Printed and Electronic)	Video Showings	Hours	Return Visits	Number of <i>Different</i> Bible Studies Conducted
January					
February					
March					
April					
May					
June					
July					
August					
September					
October					
November					
December					
<b>Total</b>					