

# Children's Ministries

## NEWS FROM THE ADRIATIC UNION

Jovan Radovanov, Children's Ministries Director

### Albanian Mission

The children of the communities where our congregations serve are the ignition engine for the future of our churches in Albania; therefore, local churches continually develop Sabbath school lessons where our little ones learn more about God's plan of salvation through Bible stories. In addition, several programmes and activities have been developed during the present year, as per below.

#### Kindergarten Festival

How wonderful it is to see a dream come true! We thank God for providing the opportunity to contribute in a wholistic education for the children of Albania through Adventist Kindergarten in Tirana. A Festival of Talents was organized in Tirana Central Church where children from the kindergarten and their parents visited our church for the first time and participated in a lovely and spiritual programme.



One of our church members said: "I was reminded of the verse in the Bible that says, "unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven." It was indeed a blessed and wonderful experience to listen the children singing, saying poems, and playing dramas. It has been one of the most beautiful programmes we have enjoyed this year, and we are sure that the parents and the church members were also delighted."

#### Vacation Bible School



We all can understand that when the summer break begins, the concern for parents also begins: what will our kids do with all of their spare time? Trying to keep their children busy while school is off is not an easy task for any parent. Our church in Korca has the "tradition" of offering VBS as an alternative to the problem and an outreach to the community. A missionary group from Brazil together with the TED Children's Ministries Director, Clair Sanches, the local church youth and his pastor Delmar Reis provided a well-equipped staff in a safe environment where children loved to attend and partake on the numerous activities suitable for their age group. The environment was filled with games, songs, Bible stories and several activities for the children of the community. You can make sure they had a lot of fun together and learned more about Jesus and His word.

### Festival of Talents

The 4th Festival of Talents was held this year in the city of Korca, with the participation of children from the different churches in Albania, and the presence of the TED Children's Ministries Director, Clair Sanches. Each church prepared a special participation, while the programme was developed using the mode of a local television news, where two girls served as



the news presenters. The programme was full of beautiful songs, musical presentations, poems, dramatizations, paintings, art, and dynamics directed by Clair Sanches. The sermon was preached by one of the girls who closed by making an appeal to share God's word with other children and their parents. In the end, each child received a watering can and a small plant from which they should take care of and give away to someone else, during the time the plant grows, the child will develop a closer friendship with his/her friend; subsequently, they will invite them to a special programme at their local churches.

"My heart rejoices to see the children active in the church, it reminds me of my childhood when I was baptized; since then, Jesus and His church have always been part of my life. It is my desire that all these children grow in wisdom and stature to God and men, as child Jesus did," concluded the children's director at the Albanian Mission.



### Messy Church

Messy church is already part of the ongoing activities in two churches in Albania, Tirana and Dures; this model targets the unchurched and involves both children and their parents in an environment where creativity, celebration and hospitality are the priority. Messy programmes meet once a month to provide people in the community the opportunity to attend Church in a different environment.

"I really like that my three children come to these programmes," expressed the mother of three children, "they learn the Bible's stories in a very practical and easy way, and the most important thing is that they learn to put into practice what they are taught. I think that this way of teaching is very effective for my children, they learn by playing and doing, they will not forget it when they grow."

## Pathfinders

Pathfinder clubs are an ongoing movement in some of our churches in Albania; they have regular meetings where they are fulfilling requirements according to their classes; kids and teens get excited as they advance getting honour patches for each module they achieve. Some Pathfinders, for example, have completed modules on biking, cooking, knots, first aids, storytelling, ironing, among others.



## Pathfinders/Adventurers Camporee 2019 "Rejoice with God"

The organizers, Clarissa Espana and Samira Goncalves, praise the Lord for the 4th Pathfinders camporee in Albania. This year the camporee was different from the previous ones, since the children did not participate with their local church but were mixed with the children of other churches by "colour teams" so each group was mixed. As prerequisites were attending the camp, the pathfinders had to complete the class called "Companion." They did a community service, read the book Steps to Christ, memorized the 10 commandments and learned by heart the 27 books of the New Testament, besides The Lord's prayer among others.

During the camporee, they performed intense physical activities such as swimming, knots, fire making, cooking outdoors, different sports, and several challenging games. At the same time, the smallest children formed their "Adventurer's club", as they also participated in their own activities, such as swimming, cooking and learning more about the Bible. At the end of the camporee, all pathfinders and adventurers that completed all the signatures got their honour patches, as they closed the ceremony committing to run the race in 1 Corinthians 9:24.

The highlight of this event was the baptismal ceremony held on Sabbath, where Pr. Delmar Reis baptized one of the pathfinders. The newly baptized expressed after coming out of the waters: "Now I have two birthdays; Jesus is in my heart; I am so happy today!" Thirteen more pathfinders accepted the call to prepare for baptism in the future. All in one voice concluded the ceremony singing the well know song; "I have decided to follow Jesus".

Sanda Thomollari, the Elbasan pathfinder leader expressed "The Pathfinder's camporee was a great experience. It was touching to see children getting each day more eager and excited to learn about God and His word. Everything was both interesting and educational, and there was an excellent proportion of organized activities and free time. Children of my church are excited to continue meeting each other during the year for Pathfinder club activities."

## Adventist Kindergarten opens its door in Tirana!

The Seventh-day Adventist Church in Albania was officially established in 1994, and it is one of the youngest churches in Europe; since then, the Church did not have any educational institution, lacking the opportunity to offer the new generations an alternative option in terms of Christian schooling.

For many years, parents had expressed the desire for their children to receive a holistic teaching in a Christian environment; nevertheless, the fulfilment of that dream seemed to be very distant.

"There should be schools established wherever there is a church or company of believers;" this advice made ADRA Albania and the Albanian Mission to combine efforts to seek God's guidance and provisions to make this dream come true. They had the vision to start the establishment of a kindergarten in Tirana, creating an opportunity to teach the children the Christian principles, core values and academical knowledge.

As a result, God answered their prayers and provided a precious group of volunteers and donors from the Church in Wahoonga, Australia led by Pr. Alban Matohiti and Colin Raymond. They took the challenge of transforming and remodelling an existing building at the ADRA compound into a new facility suitable for a modern kindergarten environment. Furthermore, all the necessary furniture and materials for the procedure of the classes were to put in place; last but not least, the Ministry of Education provided the operational kindergarten license to start running the academic year. We praise and thank God for His provisions!

It is with great joy and gratitude to God to inform that the Adventist Kindergarten in Tirana opened its doors to the community for the school year 2018-2019. God made possible to see this dream come true by providing us with a wonderful and professional staff, beautiful facilities and a lovely group of children. Ten children were initially registered in the first month and five more in the following days. The kindergarten director, Elda Bashkim, said: "We are excited about this initiative and expecting more children in the months to come; and more parents have already confirmed to come on board soon, please join us in prayers for more children to register at the Adventist Kindergarten."

The ADRA Director and the Albanian Mission officials expressed their gratitude to God and the Church at all levels for their prayers and ongoing support; they stated that with God's guidance "the kindergarten will be a pioneering, leading, and caring Christian institution, where the staff will teach our children with integrity and reliability by nurturing their spiritual, intellectual, physical, emotional and social development, facilitating their transition to primary school." This project aims to provide education to around 35 Albanian children targeting to create an excellent environment under the care of experienced and affectionate teachers.

Tirana Adventist Kindergarten is now part of the worldwide Adventist Education system, and as such it will endeavour to meet the needs of both the Church families and the community offering the children and their parents the opportunity to experience a deeper relationship with God at personal and community level. This is just a small step; there are still many needs and challenges to face, but we trust that God will continue to provide through His mercies and people who wholeheartedly will contribute with their prayers and/or resources to this cause in Albania, as we already start dreaming about a primary school in future, why not? Please join us in your prayers.



## Croatian Conference

### Slatina Fest

This year it was our 20th anniversary of this great music event which every year takes place in Slatina, small town two hours from Zagreb. This humanitarian music festival gathered this year more than 120 children from all over the Croatia and broader. As always, it was in public hall. Every year, thanks to our Lord, we get this hall from Slatina town to use it for free because they have recognised it's potential. The local newspapers and the radio are still supporting this event. The main idea behind is to gather children and their families together to nurture spiritual music and songs. By doing this we are openly celebrating our Creator for giving us life, health and great talents we can use for the wellbeing of others.



As always, this year was also full of playful children songs, many great performances, Bible messages, and a great atmosphere - the hall was packed. The theme was "Let's grow together with Ema." Few local choirs join us with their children and parents for the first time. On our stage we had one dry tree - no leaves on it. But how children were coming to the stage to perform, they were bringing the green leaves with them, so every child had opportunity to put it's leaf on the tree branches. By doing that, as festival was approaching to it's end, the tree was more and more green. This symbolism was because of humanitarian aspect of the event. Besides music, each year we choose one child or family that needs financial support. This year it was girl, two years old Ema, who was also there with her family. Ema' story is that every second year of her life, until she will reach her full height, she will have to go to aortic surgery for a new extension. During this SlatinaFest, by the help of Croatian Government Foundation and ADRA, we have collected 60.000,00 HRK (c.c. 8.100,00 €).

We were happy because our God gave us opportunity to help Ema grow. Our children know that Lord keeps blessing us, and if we keep using our talents together, we can reach many people for Christ and accomplish great things for Him.

-Matej A. Lukšić

## First Camp

Every year we have First Camp, which is a great event for every Pathfinder in Croatia. This year it was held in June 20 - 23 at an idyllic property in Samobor near Zagreb. This event did gather more than 40 pathfinders, our four clubs, who set their tents for this 4-day journey in the midst of the wood by the stream with its lovely waterfalls. Archery, Hiking, Photography and Friendship Honours, Canyoning, Shelter construction - this are just some of the great things we did together.

While we did sleep in our tents, we had our meals in the kitchen building, and our worships were open air around the fireplace. We have started every day by gathering together and raising the pathfinder flag. After that we had our devotionals with many songs, Bible and life stories which were adapted for all ages and non-church friends. We were going through many Bible stories from Nehemia's life, David's life and Jesus' earthly life, to see how God is present and leading our lives even we can't see Him - pointing to true Christian and Pathfinder values. After devotional, and tidying the camp, there were classes on Photography for Scouts, and True Friendship for the youngest. After lunch time, we had activities time. After activities we had free time, dinner, evening devotional by the fire, and preparation for the night.



Probably the most interesting activities, besides Archery and others, were Shelter construction with natural materials, and Canyoning. Friday afternoon we divided ourselves into 4 teams about 10 people each. The goal was to make a shelter for surviving a night by using just few ropes and natural materials from wood: branches, leaves, logs, stones etc. That was awesome! Although no one wanted to sleep over night in the shelter they built, some groups did really a great job. Sabbath day was special because 7 new Pathfinders joined our clubs. After that we had a Canyoning activity, which was around mentioned stream kilometre and a half up in the hill from our place. For two hours we were jumping from one side of the stream to another, over the waterfalls, under the wooden trunks, over the slippery stones - mainly practicing our great Pathfinder's rule "Bigger is watching over smaller!" We were wet, exhausted, but contentedly tired.

We are already planning for the next year and looking forward for our First Camp at Adriatic coast. We hope this would be also unforgettable experience and great journey!

-Matej A. Lukšić

## Summer Bible Camp

This year Summer bible camp for kids was held from 7th to 13th July in Maruševec, Croatia. It's been happening for years so we can say it became traditional event. Every year about a hundred kids come from all around Croatia and even from some other countries, which is a real blessing.

Children get divided into two groups. Red group are younger and blue group are older. Throughout those days we have many activities for kids as creative workshops, water slide, treasure hunting, party time with games, and this year we had also "Sign language" workshop. The one thing this camp can't be without is baseball, the main sport of the camp.

During morning there are classes where kids study new things from the Bible and rehearse a play which happens at the end of Bible camp, during the Sabbath afternoon worship. Every evening we have a service where we sing a lot and where the keynote speaker has a topic he speaks about. This year it was about bees and it was very interesting to know more about them. Those topics are always customized for kids so they can learn a life lesson on their own. We had also a one day trip when we visited some private property with lot of domestic animals and workshops so we really had a great time and learned a lot about them.

We also had volunteers on the camp that helped working with kids but they also went every day to work with gipsy kids in the nearby village through singing and playing with them. We are grateful to God for this opportunity where we can work with kids and praise Him through all activities.

-Anja Garvanović



## TED Camporee

We as Pathfinders from Croatia were also part of the TED Camporee 2019 that was held in England this summer from 30th of July to 6th of August. The most of us from Croatia travelled by bus to the Camporee and after lot of traveling by bus and visiting Frankfurt and London we joined the Camporee site with other pathfinders from Croatia, Slovenia and Serbia with whom we shared our camp on the Camporee site. There were about 120 of us in our camp and we had a great time together. We enjoyed our time together building our camp, having a campfire almost every evening, singing and having fellowship with each other. It was a special privilege also to be together with 3700 other Pathfinders from our Division, worship together every evening, sing together, praise our God and listen the sermons from our speaker Melissa. The main topic of our Camporee was Exodus of Israel and that notion was transferred to us as Pathfinders not only through sermons, but also through activities, games, food etc. There were lot of activities where Pathfinders could know each other and make friends - which was very exciting for children and young people.



We liked very much the Rover hike by night maybe because from 25 teams, our Rovers took the first and third place 🏆. But the most moving moments of the Camporee were when 9 young people decided to announce by baptism that they want to walk with God through the rest of their lives. We joined our voices in worship with all the universe and felt the part of Heaven on earth during that baptism.

On the last day of the camp when the last song were sang we felt a sadness in our hearts, but we are glad that we will going to be part of the next Camporee in Latvia. We are looking forward to seeing our friends that we met on this Camporee there and to worship our God all together united in love.

-Tunde Torma



## Slovenian Conference

### Creative Intergenerational Worship on Sabbath afternoon

Lively Sabbath afternoon with a special children's worship can be a real blessing for the whole church community and a great opportunity to celebrate the gift of creativity that God has given us. Children's and Youth departments in Ljubljana Church teamed together to prepare a programme that encouraged intergenerational participation and glorified God's creativity in nature.

- Anja Cikač



### Day at the farm in Krško

It is a special day when children spend the whole day at the farm. Every day has a different theme (farm animals, forest animals, natural materials, old games and recipes, etc.). We visit animal friendly farms where we can

help with taking care for the animals and enjoying time with them, like feeding the cows, batching the pigs and riding horses. The goal is to teach the children that animals are our friends and we need to take care of them, spend more time in the nature and take care of it, be loving and respectful to each others and to love and glorify our God.

- Rene Ribič

### Nature about God

In 2019 the Children's Ministries department in Ljubljana initiated the meeting that encourage children to get acquainted with the Biblical values through nature. These meetings connect children with each other and keep them away from the screens. At the same time this activities are enriching the Sabbath experience.

- Sabina Bauer

### Messy Church in Maribor

Messy Church in Maribor has been active for 6 years already. Between 15 and 30 children attend each programme together with their parents and grandparents. Many of them are from non-Adventist families and this is their only contact with the Church. We believe that the time, energy and creativity invested in the work with children pays dividends that surpass the investment. The Messy Church has proven to be an effective outreach programme that strengthens the Church community.

- Suzana Thaler





**UBUNTU**

The last week in August is traditionally reserved for Children's Week in Ptuj, the oldest recorded city in Slovenia. The Ubuntu camp with Africa in focus welcomed more than 50 children aged 4 to 18, majority from non-Adventist families, who learned about Africa and God through devotionals, sports, arts, educational and creative activities. The five-day camp was organized by Pathfinders Club Slovenia and ADRA Slovenia with the support of a local SDA church.

- Patricija Vrtič



**Slovenian Pathfinders at TED Camporee**

TED Camporee in England hosted 40 pathfinders from Slovenia. This camporee was extra special for us, as it was the first one where any Slovene pathfinders were baptised. Two sisters, Amelie and Noemi, decided to accept Jesus as their Lord and Saviour. During the ceremony tears of joy were falling from the faces of proud parents, both master guides, pastor Marko, our national pathfinders' president and fellow pathfinders, who also prepared a special reception for the beloved sisters.

- Patricija Vrtič



**Children Sermons**

What do you get when you give the pulpit to the children? A very creative and inspiring sermon! In Ljubljana Church this started to happen in 2017 and in the past two years children have prepared sermons on the topics like Bible, fruit of the Spirit, Thanksgiving and others. Together with lively songs on the topic of the sermon and the accompanying programme these occasions have proved to be a great blessing not only for the church community in Ljubljana but also for other churches in the Conference that we have visited.

- Tatiana Godina Marin



**"Have a minute?"**

Children's department and Pathfinders in Ljubljana have teamed up and prepared a special outdoor outreach activity entitled "Have a minute?". Through various activities like Christian table games, face painting, quizzes and other activities the visitor of Park Tivoli have been invited to stop for a moment and enjoy some time in the beautiful nature and good company.

- Tatiana Godina Marin and Maša Česnik

**Special weekends**

Each year the leadership of Slovenian Conference prepares various thematic weekends for church members and their friends. The themes cover spirituality, health, family, marriage and other topics. In 2019 the Conference Children's Ministries Department provided a special programme for children for each weekend. While their parents have participated in the activities for them, children could learn about taking care for health, spiritual values, participate in treasure hunts, visited aquarium, play and talk, and went for a ride with pirate ship.

- Tatiana Godina Marin

**"Children for Children" charity concert**

It is somewhat traditional for children in our tiny country to share their talents at the end of the school year. At a charity concert that was held on 15 June 2019 in Ljubljana children and young people performed in solo acts, duets, groups and choirs – with singing, trumpet, flute, saxophone, piano, guitar, cello, melodica, Cajon, ukulele, etc., with the aim to provide resources that would help unite a refugee family and raised almost 800 €.

In the past our children have been collecting funds to enable children to visit summer camps, to provide them with school supplies, to finance mandatory school uniforms for them in ADRA's school in Burundi, to help feed families and children in South Sudan during a devastating famine and others.

- Andreja Plečko



### Sleepover in the Church

At least twice a year children from Ljubljana Church and their friends from other local churches and non-churched friends spend the night in the Church. One of these occasions was after this year's charity concert "Children for Children". They enjoyed and shared in a number of different activities that were prepared for them - like sports games, going for ice cream, getting to know exotic animals, chemistry experiments, jumping in the trampoline park and water splash at the church yard, as well as listening to and participating in the devotional and workshop entitled "Different". It was a great way to also celebrate the end of a school year.

- Tatiana Godina Marin



### Beginning of the new school year

Each year at the beginning of the new school year there is a special sermon prepared in Ljubljana Church. The aim of it is to provide children and young people with the Biblical advice and encouragement for the challenges that are part of their schooling. The whole church community gathers around the children and young people and asks God to bless them. In order to remember these occasions children are provided with small gifts.

-Tatiana Godina Marin

This is a short selection of various events for and by children in the Slovenian Conference.

Greetings from Slovenia!

Tatiana

