Preparation. This program can be organized as a dialogue, interviews with “missionaries,” a panel discussion, or any other creative way you can design.

Bible Verse: And He said to them, “Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned. And these signs will follow those who believe: In My name they will cast out demons; they will speak with new tongues.” Mark 16:15-17

Hymns: -Seventh-day Adventist Hymnal no. 370, “Christ for the World”

-Seventh-day Adventist Hymnal no. 368, “Watchman, Blow the Gospel Trumpet.”

Even as you and I are attending Sabbath School today, thousands of Adventist missionaries from many different countries are carrying out all kinds of activities around the world.

They are working in schools, hospitals, evangelism, departmental capacities, preaching, baptizing. In general, they are doing the work of the church, and some are even working in dangerous and unfriendly circumstances. Some are on the very edges of what we usually term “civilization.” They are known as “frontier” and “pioneer” missionaries.

In one sense every Christian is a missionary. Ellen G. White writes, “Every true disciple is born into the kingdom of God as a missionary” (The Desire of Ages, p. 195).

Taking this to heart, there are many church members who participate in mission trips and projects. Organizations like Maranatha Volunteers International recruit craftsmen who, paying their own expenses, travel to places around the world to build churches, renovate old buildings, and make all kinds of improvements to church properties. These are called “short-term” missionaries.

Student missionaries from Adventist educational institutions often serve for a specific period of time in overseas assignments, again raising their own funding. Others participate in school-sponsored mission trips, which are also short-term assignments. No one returns from these experiences the same person as when they went. They swiftly learn exactly what Ellen G. White’s statement about “true disciples” being missionaries means.
Long-term Missionaries

In a more delimited sense, however, a long-term or life-long missionary is one who works in a culture not his or her own, possibly having crossed salt water to get there. To do this on a long-term successful and productive manner is a spiritual gift. Not every person is called to be this kind of missionary.

Some people have been given a special ability by the Lord to work happily and cheerfully in a culture not their own. They like the food. They rapidly learn the language. They pick up the body language. They feel that a culture not their own has become home. If you ask them about the great sacrifice they are making in living “overseas,” they will tell you that their greatest sacrifice is having to go back to where they came from. To them “home” is where they live and work as missionaries. In fact, they probably do not “feel” like anything but part of the culture in which they are currently working. In today’s world, Adventist missionaries go from everywhere to anywhere, in that they work somewhere on planet earth other than their original homeland.

These are the missionaries we support with our Sabbath School mission offerings. These are the people from many nations who are working somewhere away from their homeland to win people to the truth. These are people who deserve to be remembered in our prayers. These are people who deserve all the help our mission offerings can give.

Peter Didn’t Have the Gift

The Apostle Peter was no missionary. Paul was right when he said that the Lord had made him the apostle to the Gentiles and Peter the apostle to the Jews (Galatian 2:7). Peter’s ingrained prejudices simply did not allow him to be a missionary as effectively as Paul.

Nevertheless, the Lord used Peter as a short-term missionary on a couple of occasions. Acts 10 records when Peter was given a vision that told him the gospel should go to the Gentiles. When Peter got to Cornelius’ house, however, the first thing he said was that he really shouldn’t be there (Acts 10:28). Then he said, in effect, that if the Lord hadn’t given him a direct message, he would not have come (Acts 10:29).

Peter later claimed to have learned a lesson and to be in favor of the Gentiles’ coming into the church (Acts 10:34). The church was impressed enough to admit that God apparently had granted repentance “even” to the Gentiles (Acts 11:18). Sometime later, however, Peter reverted to his non-Gentile position (Galatians 2:11-14).

One of the reasons we support missions financially is that not everyone is called to work in another culture. But the Lord does expect all of us to participate in the missionary effort to reach all peoples through financial support and through a prayer ministry.

Paul Had It!

Jesus set the pace for missionary outreach. He went to Samaria. He healed the daughter of a Phoenician woman. He entertained some Greeks who came to see him. And above all, he associated with the very people the Jews considered outcasts.

Following in the footsteps of Jesus, Paul is considered the pioneer missionary in the New Testament. He was directly called by the Holy Spirit to be a missionary (Acts 13:1-3), and subsequently took the gospel to the known world in about one generation. He successfully presented the case for the Gentiles at the Jerusalem Council. He took a Middle Eastern religion into Europe and made Europe the new home base for Christianity. Half of the books in the New Testament are the records of his missionary work. It was Paul, the former Pharisee and Jewish
nationalist, who developed the theology that allowed the Gentiles equal status in the church (Romans 9-11).

So, we can all support long- and short-term mission outreach. That makes all of us “missionaries” in God’s sight.