

Revival & REFORMATION

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Answer to Prayer for Church in Turkey

By ChanMin Chung

Visitors often think of the Taksim Seventh-day Adventist Church in Istanbul, Turkey, as a place with panoramic views over the Bosphorus and the metropolitan area.

For Adventists in Turkey, the church property, situated near the bustling center of Taksim Square, has been a symbolic place because it represents the history of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in the country.

Karnik Doukmetzian, of the Office of General Counsel of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, said that the property, including a four-story complex, was purchased by the Adventist denomination in 1927. The church building was constructed in 1958 and recognized by the city of Istanbul as a house of prayer. However, church members almost lost this valuable place.

The property was registered under a foreign Church worker's name because Turkey did not recognize the denomination at the time. The Church employee returned to his home country due to a health condition that eventually took his life before he was able to transfer the title of the property from his name to his successor.

After the worker's death, a dispute over the property arose between his family and the denomination, with the family claiming that the property belonged to their father rather than the Church. Over the next 50 years, leaders tried unsuccessfully to transfer the property and to negotiate with the family to relinquish the title, even though the local church had been in continuous possession and use of the property since 1927.

Church members prayed, but all seemed to no avail. By 2015, the remaining family members of the Church employee had decided that rather than transfer the property to the denomination as had been agreed to, they would sell the property to a local buyer.

Recently, Church regional office leaders celebrated the success of establishing the denomination's legal status in Turkey. On the same day, however, a visitor came and told them that he was the owner of the disputed property and had bought the property from the inheritors some months before.

“It was the most troubled day in my ministry,” said Hyosu Jung, president of the West Asia Field regional office of the Adventist Church in Turkey. “I couldn’t even think about what we needed to do next.”

Middle East and North Africa Union president Rick McEdward said he felt the same way as Jung. “We thought we might even lose the building and the property and lose one of our only lighthouses in the entire Middle East, which caused us great concern,” McEdward said.

The situation led leaders and members in the Middle East and North Africa to pray for a resolution, Jung said, and he finally found peace in God. “As I saw many sincere prayers, I gave up all my anxiety and trusted God because He is the One who owns the entire universe,” he said.

While members and leaders were praying for the property and still going forward with the church’s work, Doukmetzian, with the consent and financial assistance of the General Conference, was able to arrange a transaction to secure the property for the Adventist Church. He informed the regional leadership of the good news that the Seventh-day Adventist Church once again had become the lawful registered owner of the property as of October 9, 2018.

Doukmetzian and his colleagues knew the significance of their work to regain the property. “On the maps of the city of Istanbul, the property is listed as a house of prayer,” Doukmetzian said. “To have the freedom to worship in this place is important for members and the gospel work.”

McEdward expressed his gratitude for the many people who wholeheartedly worked and prayed for this property. “Around the world, people started praying, and the General Conference gave its support and provided consultation with legal issues,” McEdward said. “Little by little, with prayer, with hard work, with people partnering together, with consultation, with doing things that were needed, it became clear that there was a way forward in reestablishing our presence on the Taksim property.”

After a little renovation, the Taksim Seventh-day Adventist Church celebrated its reopening with church members, workers, and guests this past February, and two new believers were baptized that day.

McEdward said he prays that this reopened church will be the center of God’s work in the community and the country. “This property offers us a place to gather, to pray, to train our members, and to increase the knowledge of our people from around Turkey so that they can show God’s love to their neighbors and their fellow countrymen.” Truly God hears and answers prayer!

ChanMin Chung is Communications Manager for the Middle East and North Africa Union.

World Church Prayer Requests

May 26 – June 2, 2019

- **PRAYER REQUEST:** Please continue to pray for our church members in the central African country of Burundi. Pray that God will provide for a helpful resolution to the challenges being faced, and for peace and prosperity for the leaders and members.
- **PRAYER REQUEST:** Pray for the church in Turkey, that God will continue to use them as a lighthouse on the hill and that they will be a “house of prayer” for those in need.
- **PRAYER REQUEST:** Pray for the Middle East and North Africa Union (MENAU), and the cities that have no Adventist presence—that God will raise up laborers for the harvest. There are 48 cities of 1 million or more people in this territory alone, some of which a Seventh-day Adventist has never set foot in.
- **PRAYER REQUEST:** Please pray for the leadership of the MENAU, including Rick McEdward, president; Tibor Szilvasi, secretary; and Michael Wixwat, treasurer.
- **PRAYER REQUEST:** Please pray for church members in the MENAU to have courage as they often feel alone and isolated. Religious persecution is still rampant in many areas.
- **PRAYER REQUEST:** The 10/40 window is home to 236 cities of a million or more residents. Please pray for committed missionaries willing to minister to the unreached people of these cities.
- **PRAYER REQUEST:** Please continue to pray for the Mobile Wellness Clinic taking place June 2 – 6, 2019, in preparation for a Total Member Involvement event in India. Total Member Involvement evangelistic meetings are scheduled to take place across the country June 12-30, 2019. Pray for God to work in a mighty way in these meetings!