

Malta: Nearly 50 Years After First Outreach, Adventists Have a Church on Historic Isle

July 25, 2006 Birkirkara, Malta [Vincenzo Annunziata/ANN Staff]

Nearly a half-century after the first Seventh-day Adventist literature evangelist visited the island where the apostle Paul was shipwrecked in AD 60, Malta has a Seventh-day Adventist Church with its own building and 17 members.

Pastor Ulrich Frikart, president of the Adventist church's Euro-Africa region, presented the dedication message and the consecration prayer in a church packed with visitors and guests including Pastor Daniele Benini, president of the Adventist church in Italy and Gaetano Pisipisa, the Italian church's Treasurer. Also present were several other pastors who served the church in the past.

Attendees said the event was joyful, with pastors and church leaders sharing words of gratitude and praise. Adding to the special nature of the event, four new members were baptized the evening before.

It was 1976 when Charlie Mallia and his wife, Jessie, returned from Australia to Malta, their homeland. They were the first Seventh-day Adventists known to reside permanently in this island, which today counts more than 355,000 very conservative Roman-Catholics . Since 1957, according to the Seventh-day Adventist Encyclopedia, Second Edition, literature evangelists have visited the island annually.

In solitude, the Mallias kept their faith and kept also asking the Adventist church in Italy for a pastor to minister on their island. In 1989, 13 years later, their request was finally answered with the arrival of pastor Enrico Long, followed through the years by pastors Timoteo Marzocchini, Giovanni Leonardi, and, currently, David Ferraro.

During the ministry of Pastor Leonardi, the Lord motivated a church member, an American who had resided in Malta, to give a generous financial donation that was used to purchase a building. Now serving as a church, the building is located on the main road of Birkirkara, a large town on the island. It took two years to renovate and restore it.

Malta, which had been administered by the Roman Empire, Arab conquerors, Sicilians and, for several hundred years by the Knights of St. John, fell to the French during the Napoleonic Wars and in the early 19th Century became a British colony, gaining independence in 1964. Its predominant religion, claiming 97 percent of the population, is Roman Catholicism, with Muslims comprising 2 percent and other religions 1 percent.



Pastor Ulrich Frikart (right), Adventist church president for the Euro-Africa region, presented the dedication message and a prayer of consecration for the new Adventist church on the island of Malta. He is pictured with Pastor David Ferraro (left). [Photos courtesy of the Italian Adventist Church]



Members and guests at the dedication service of the new Seventh-day Adventist Church in Malta.



Jessie and Charlie Mallia were the first Seventh-day Adventists living in Malta.



The new home of the Seventh Day Adventist church in Malta.

