

SOLITARY SERVICE IN SARAJEVO

By Armin Wilhelm

On Sundays, I sang, prayed, and gave talks by myself. Would other members begin attending meetings too?

As a member of the German military, I spent more than half of 1999 in Sarajevo, the capital of Bosnia and Herzegovina. My military assignment came with great challenges and long hours, but I always took time off to attend church in a small chapel used by various denominations in our camp of 750.

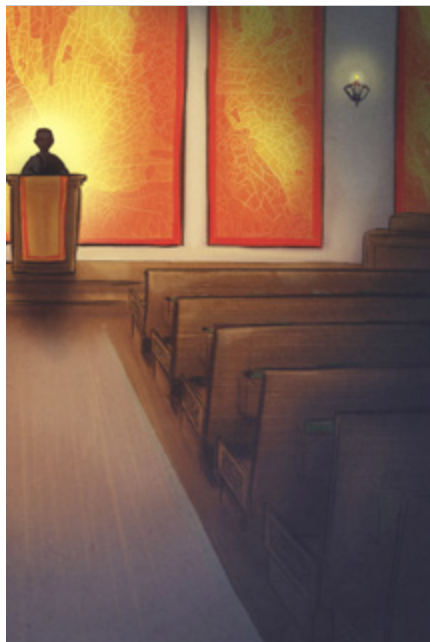
When I arrived at the chapel one Sunday afternoon, I found the doors locked. I learned that the other members of the Church in the camp had been transferred. I was disappointed because I had looked forward to worshipping and partaking of the sacrament. Before coming to Sarajevo, I had been busy serving as a branch president in Germany and was able to partake of the sacrament regularly.

Several weeks later, I was assigned to accompany my general on a visit to an American division. During lunch, an American captain who had seen me talking to other soldiers asked if I was a member of the Church. After I told him I was, he gave my name and contact information to the senior group leader of the Church there.

Soon a Brother Fisher contacted me. Following an interview, he set

me apart as the group leader of the Church in Sarajevo with the assignment to set up a group. (A group is a Church unit in military installations, similar to a branch.)

I began posting meeting times on bulletin boards and sending out invitations, hoping to find other Latter-day Saints in military barracks in Sarajevo. For the first few weeks, no one else attended. So on Sundays, I sang, prayed, and gave talks by myself. Following Church guidelines for leaders and members in the military, I was



able to bless and partake of the sacrament without a second priesthood holder. This brought me great joy.

I held my solitary meetings in English so I could improve my English language skills. The first talk I gave was about Joseph Smith. No one visible was in the room, but I sensed the presence of others. The Holy Ghost strengthened me and revealed to me how important it was for the work of the Lord to begin anew in this place.

A few weeks after I held my first Sunday meeting, a young American soldier entered the chapel. She had been baptized only a few months before. I was so happy! Two weeks later, another sister arrived. Then two brothers came. With the help of the Lord, the Church began growing in Sarajevo.

Now the Church has a branch in Sarajevo. As I remember my time there, I reflect on the honor the Lord gave me to serve in a special way—to be a little cog in His work and to know that “out of small things proceedeth that which is great” (D&C 64:33). ■

The author lives in Rhineland-Palatinate, Germany.