

African Missionary Testimony: Where You Lead Me, I Will Follow

Annerose Buth Adams

October 2023

1975 Unification Church Missionary to: Togo, Côte d'Ivoire, Senegal and Nigeria



From the Early Days

At the age of nine, in our dark and cluttered living room, I stumbled across the book Uncle Tom's Cabin. Even though I could not grasp the contents fully, it pained my heart and made me cry. A desire developed within me to go out one day and somehow make restitution for at least a tiny part of the inhumane acts committed by our forebears. My childlike thoughts took me to Africa. Events of the 1960s, such as my family's division through the Berlin Wall, global political volatility, and assassinations of prominent leaders, like John F. Kennedy and Martin Luther King Jr. were traumatic for me and brought turmoil to my religious faith. Even though I felt no choice but to doubt God, the only prayer I did continue was for the children in Africa. I never imagined that I

could ever reach this continent, though – the idea alone was outlandish enough!

Where You Lead Me, I Will Follow

As a member of the Unification Movement since 1973, I felt personally called by God to partake in a worldwide pioneering project, starting in May 1975. I volunteered for the small, West African country of Togo; I had never heard of it before but felt intuitively that this would be the 'right' one for me. Yet, at the same time, I was blown away -- could something I had dismissed for so long as a ridiculous 'dream' actually come to pass? One of the smallest and poorest West African countries, Togo was a former German, then a French colony. After independence in 1960, it became a target by communist regimes. This was the only information I could gather. The farewell from family, friends and home was a harsh trial. Plus, I worried about my weak physical constitution. In particular, the sun used to make me ill, and I easily fainted. How on earth would I cope in Africa? Just the thought made me dizzy, and so I forbade it. During the preparation period, the significance of our role as the representatives of our True Parents for the worldwide providence became overwhelmingly clear -- at times, I felt much anxiety. One particular directive given to us was etched in my mind: 'It is crucial to find a way to remain in your countries!' I frequently visited the Holy Ground; it became the innermost embracing confidant that accepted all that I expressed there – even my fears of sickness, sacrifice, failure and death. The great commission given by Jesus to his apostles 2,000 years ago resounded in my heart. Now it was our True Father who sent us out as the apostles of this new age!

Arrival in a New Future

The crazy vision of my childhood became a reality! Being at an airport and boarding a plane were utterly new experiences. Towards midnight, at full moon, the aircraft descended towards the small landing strip in Lomé. The first thing that hit me with full force was the exceptional humidity. My whole body and belongings were suddenly wet! I overcame a fainting attack on the way down the passenger stairway from the plane. Intentionally I dropped my handbag to have a reason to touch the new ground to greet the land. Here I was for the sole purpose of representing our True Parents.

Afraid to take a taxi ride into total darkness and what seemed like an absolute nothingness, I refused to leave the airport. Instead, I spent the night on a chair next to the guards and police officers in their tiny quarters. After sunrise at five a.m., moist luggage in tow, I accepted a ride with a Lieutenant named Alpha, indeed the sign of a new beginning! Should there be someone with the name Omega to signal the end of this mission? – a quiet thought which would resurface occasionally.

First Day, First Weeks The long drive took us through rural terrain dipped into the warm, reddish light of the rising sun, reflected by the rust-red earth. I felt wrapped in a cocoon, embraced, and welcomed.

So many children with buckets full of water on their little heads and thin, often emaciated shoulders struggling through the crowds, others begging with desperate children's eyes! I felt like the only white 'chess figure' sticking out from the crowd, and I was torn – should I give them some money? To my relief and joy, I discovered a supermarket with some European groceries, including small tins of Nescafé! Later, there was a knock on my door: a tall soldier in an olive-green uniform. Lieutenant Alpha had sent him to invite me to an Independence Day celebration organised by the North Koreans. My heart was pounding –

I had not expected to encounter an element of communism so quickly.

After declining politely, I felt less safe and changed lodgings soon. An alarm clock wasn't necessary – a good size mouse across your face or the dog's noises creeping in through the hole of the missing air conditioner perfectly fulfilled this function – welcome to West Africa! Apart from consuming biscuits and Nescafé, eating became a bit of a research project – the first avocado, mango and other mysterious, local delicacies. When I was not exploring the outside, I spent many hours in my humble, small room, praying and processing the new, daily experiences and encounters.



From One to Three

The American sister came in mid-May. Many of my previous concepts and experiences, together with my character and perceptions, were now being challenged. Additionally, I realised that circumstances had gifted me with a new job as a permanent translator into French and then back into English – all the time! Our Japanese brother arrived in June. He spoke hardly any English and no French.

First Struggles

Never before had communication been so precious! Now that it was missing, I realised how often this invaluable aspect of life is taken for granted. Three very different cultures, three young strangers in their early twenties with a certain immaturity and naivety in common, especially with regard to social experience and psychological insight. The three of us were aware of the weight of history, and we spent much time in conversation in endless efforts to bridge our cultural differences. In the early morning, we held a simple morning service. Our True Father's speeches, as well as the blue air-mail letters from our German Headquarters, were a real source of inspiration and encouragement. The cultural centres of France, the United States, Germany, and Great Britain soon became vital access-points to a deeper understanding of this society's social, political, and traditional life.

Existential Crises

Three white 'chess figures' moving around together caused unwanted attention, if not suspicion. The application for new visas was indeed a tense process: Long-term visas required thorough investigation and fulfilment of several criteria. Complex cases would be referred to the Minister of Internal Affairs. He refused the renewal of our American sister's visa. On Christmas Eve, a police van took her to the border of neighbouring Ghana. Feelings of loneliness and worries overshadowed this first Christmas in our country. In January 1976, we undertook our first journey to Ghana to search for our American sister. We were greatly relieved to find her safe, together with the three missionaries to Ghana. The vision of both of our missionary trinities supporting each other from now on gave us new hope as the Japanese brother and I returned to Togo. Back in Lomé, things took an unexpected turn. After a night in police custody, my Japanese brother also was deported to Ghana. All of a sudden, I was on my own again.

Working Underground

Every day brought an adventure or at least a new experience. Why not translate the German booklet of the general introduction to the Divine Principle into French? I taught myself to type on a rickety typewriter. The German cultural center offered some unexpected, valuable avenues.

Despite my meagre qualifications, I began to translate for visiting businesspeople. Ever so gradually, I obtained a minimal, professional status. On Sundays, I visited churches. On some pews, I intentionally 'lost' mini versions of the New Testament with my address. I hoped that anyone who was sincere enough would return the copy and that we could become friends.

New Tests and the First Breakthrough

During this time on my own, our True Father's speeches provided deep inspiration, as did the internal guidance by Reverend Ken Sudo. After six months, the German missionary sister from Benin joined me in Lomé instead of being in her country by herself. In September, unexpectedly, my Japanese brother returned with a new visa and better English. One day, the Japanese brother implored me for greater unity and trust.

His urgency was not without reason – at this point, it was my visa that was about to expire. I promised God to support my brother and unconditionally unite with his proposals and actions, no matter how curious or incomprehensible these might appear. I pleaded with God that He might grant this new visa if I

succeeded in this 100 percent. From the perspective of government authority, my reasons for a prolonged stay were not particularly convincing. However, during this interview, the words that flowed out of my mouth were not my own – appealing to remain because of my love for this land. A few weeks later, I received my three-year residence permit. This situation taught me three things: first, an earnest and genuine heart and motivation really can move God. Second, the power of unity. Third, even as the less experienced one, the quality of my faith has an impact and is of great importance for the work of the whole. Our work together turned into joy and was blessed with a new momentum.



Unearthing of a Treasure and First Substantial Hope

We decided to move to a more densely populated area. First of all, I was allowed to experience a deeper level of internal rebirth.

Especially on the foundation of the continual study of our True Father's words, I began to shed tears and feel profound repentance about myself in my prayers, not just intellectually but in heart and emotions. During these hours, I felt confirmation from God that our True Parents were MY True

Parents! Through our landlord, we met his son-in-law; let's call him Abel. He was different from most of the people we had met so far – self-assured, ambitious and intelligent. These attributes made him become the first person to receive lectures about the Divine Principle. Before then, I had never given any lectures. With hopeful anticipation, I developed my French lecture guide.

First Foundation

We had learned that there were many informers of all ages. Therefore, we chose an inner room for the lectures to keep any such potential threat at arm's length. Abel came for lectures regularly.

In November 1977, Abel was the first person in Togo to learn the complete content of the Divine Principle. He understood the profound significance. At this pivotal moment, he received an enticing job opportunity in another West African country. Our night of desperate prayer could not hold him back. After months of investment and hope, we were shattered.

Spurred on by our positive experience teaching Abel, we found a little strategy: telling younger people about the 'very interesting philosophy we are studying ourselves'. Once their curiosity was sparked, we'd invite them to come along to a free session. When our American sister eventually returned to Togo in 1978, the three of us could finally stay and work together! A few young people began to openly embrace the content of our teaching. Within a few months, we had a little group of students for discussion, study and even singing.

Victories, Trials and New Steps

Exactly three years after my arrival, we established our first Holy Ground, very near the National Independence Monument. In mid-May, during our first two-day workshop in Lomé, our four serious students declared their readiness to follow our True Parents. Two weeks later, the government announced a policy to counter any type of new and existing religious groups or organisations. This was a blow. In the firm belief that this would benefit Togo in the long term, we left for Côte d'Ivoire in October 1978 with two of our young brothers and the burning desire to return as soon as possible.

Côte d'Ivoire

After our relatively quiet life in Lomé, we found a different reality in the capital Abidjan: open activities and witnessing, teaching, singing – and missionaries from several countries.

Everything was accompanied by countless prayer and fasting conditions. New on African soil was fundraising! We would visit business areas in pairs and ask for donations from numerous local and international enterprises.

We also participated in the development of Home Church activities. Meeting our True Father in New York for the first time on the occasion of his 60th birthday was an unforgettable experience. Afterwards, I was asked to support the mission in Senegal for a while.

Senegal

An orange-yellow, pale sun and misty air greeted me in Dakar in April 1980. Guided by the deeply

devoted American sister, our movement was made up of a small group of Senegalese brothers. So far, my direct experience with the spirit and culture of Islam had been minimal; to adjust to this different religious and cultural environment was quite a challenge.

Prayer, Holy Songs, inspiration or guidance from above – to break through spiritually took an immense effort. We met students on the sprawling university campus, visited VIPs and served in our Home Church areas. We taught the Divine Principle from the Islamic perspective; I also studied the Qur'an. My Japanese brother was still in Côte d'Ivoire, but my American sister continued to work in Togo, and my hope to go back to Togo increased.



Where Is My Life?

It turned out very differently. Headquarters had written a letter to me which never arrived. So, on the last weekend of 1980, I learned, as if in passing, that I was no longer to be a missionary to Togo, with immediate effect. With the shock came tears. It felt as if my heart had been ripped out of me. A whirlwind of questions occupied my mind – had I failed? Had I made a big mistake? What would now happen to Togo? I was devastated. Then came an offer – to go to Nigeria 'for a while' and support fundraising activities for a new center in Lagos, the

then capital. After exactly 40 days, the cross country journey – through Togo – brought me to the continent's most populous nation.

Nigeria – New Home – New Outlook – the First Eight Years

Upon my arrival in Lagos in February 1981, I knelt for prayer on the blue linoleum floor when I heard a soft voice behind me: "You have come home." I burst into tears. At the end of these 40 days, convinced of my worthlessness and uselessness, God cleared these feelings and granted healing and new hope. I was officially assigned as a missionary to Nigeria in November 1981. Now I saw this as a great blessing. From the start, I had a strong intuition about the extraordinary potential of this mega country. This mission was precious, an honour to be mine. A new homeland was in the making.

The highlights of these years are too numerous to be covered in detail, each deserving its full description as a testimony to God's love, guidance and presence. My great joys were witnessing, teaching, observing the 'birth' of our core members, and organising workshops and fundraising campaigns all over Nigeria. In 1983, True Father emphatically told me in a dream about the importance of the Professors World Peace Academy (PWPA) and the necessity to invest significantly in its development. Based on this dream, I asked for this responsibility to strengthen and build up the evolving Nigerian chapter of PWPA. After all, Nigeria possessed the wealth of nearly 50 Nigerian universities and educational institutions! By the light of candles or kerosene lamps, without computers, phones or a dependable mailing system, we organised our largely self-financed conferences and initiatives from scratch. Our Nigerian professors enthusiastically participated in historical events such as the newspaper rally for religious freedom initiated by peace-loving, religious leaders and citizens from all sectors of society, especially in America. Soon afterwards, we took a delegation of Nigerian academics to Geneva, Switzerland, for the 1985 -- PWPA conference, which announced the end of communism. In Nigeria and beyond, these high-ranking intellectuals became a voice for the vision of our True Parents. They also developed small agricultural projects, published articles and sent recommendations to the government of the day. Our mission was full of life. No day was long enough. In 1985, my husband Robert from Great Britain joined me in Nigeria; the following years were testing times, full of unique experiences.

Nigeria – Full Expansion – the Second Eight Years

After the birth of our two sons in Great Britain, our young family returned to Nigeria in August 1991. There was now the highly dynamic and capable leadership of some American missionaries and their families – it was the fulfilment of one of my consistent prayers since my first arrival in the country. My primary responsibility was to raise funds on ever-higher levels to help our activities expand. For over eight years, a fabulous sister and I sold oil paintings from New York to directors of local and international companies and wealthy individuals. My husband and I also supported the numerous Marriage Blessings, Women's Federation for World Peace events and a variety of other projects. For one year in the early nineties, Robert also worked with the mission in Russia. A culminating point was the visit of our True Mother to Abuja, the new capital of Nigeria, in December 1993. Two years later, in November 1995, our beloved True Parents came to visit Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana and other nations further south. Most memorable was the unique opportunity for some missionaries to share breakfast with our True Parents. Our True Father said that my husband and I looked like brother and sister and asked Robert to develop a football team in Nigeria. With great passion, Robert established the Il Hwa Nigeria Football

Club, which played successfully in Lagos for several seasons. Gradually, Nigeria assumed a position of strengthening the mission of other African nations. The pressure and the need for finance became immense and relentless. In partnership with an international business consortium in Lagos, our leaders opened a small chain of highly successful restaurants. My husband and I fulfilled several roles in these establishments during the mid-nineties, next to continued fundraising and Marriage Blessing activities. In 1998, I joined the marketing team made up of Nigerian and some international expert members who were pioneering to establish one of the first Internet providers in Nigeria – Nigeria Online.

God's Time Is the Best

In 1999, we were still in Nigeria but prepared ourselves for the changes on the horizon, to respond to a National Messiah assignment closer to Europe. After all these years, we had to prepare for leaving Africa. It was hard to fathom, to leave what had become home. One day, in September 1999, I quietly said to myself: 'How I wish to see Togo one more time.' The following day, another sister and I were sent to Benin and Togo for a small project. I felt overwhelmed by God knowing my wish and His love, expressed in such a personal and unexpected way. Little did I know that there was a deeper reason behind this. In Togo, we had a promising appointment with the chairman of a construction firm but were asked to see another director instead. This person introduced himself as Mr Amegan – just like Omega, he pointed out twice. It was as if lightning struck. This quiet thought of 24 years ago, that Alpha might conclude one day with Omega – here it was, in substance! Even today, this 'skin-touch' by my Heavenly Parent is as fresh and real as all those years ago. How much did God wish me to know His omnipresence! I felt a certain guilt, saying: "You didn't have to do this, dear God – if it appeared that I doubted You, I am very sorry."

That same night we were called back to Lagos. Only four days later, we left the country and continent. There was barely any time for farewells.

Express Train to the Present

Since then, our True Parents have been received in Africa on numerous occasions, including a large summit in Nigeria in 2011. As the representative of our vibrant Universal Peace Federation (UPF) South-London chapter, I had the opportunity to participate in the event. It was on this Nigerian soil that I saw our True Father for the last time. The nations in which I worked now have firm foundations for the restoration of Africa. Togo, too, has made progress. My American sister, her Japanese husband, and their family laboured there for many years to grow deep roots and establish a solid base. Finally, in 2016, I could visit Togo, and it remains a part of my life through regular connection with the members and their work.

Those Who Are Unforgotten

We original three 'chess figures' of 1975 are still in contact through the unbreakable bond that only this shared undertaking for Heaven could create. Over the decades, several nations became a part of our innermost hearts, each a home forever – each with its incomparable, unique character, shaped by the culture, love, beauty, faith, and suffering of its communities. Never forgotten are those who, in the end, could not follow the path. Most of all, though, our precious members and their families who have toiled and sacrificed so much are deeply cherished. Many are now leaders on the national or continental level and world citizens, Deeply honoured is the group of those called to the spirit world so early.

'... bide your time with patience and something good will come to you.' This precious advice offered by our True Father in his autobiography is one that we can all relate to. In the latter part of 2019, I came to experience the truth of this in a profound way. Out of the blue, a project called me to the country of Niger in West Africa. Do you remember Abel? Totally unexpected, it was in the capital, Niamey, that we met again! Abel and his small blessed family have lived there for a long time as part of our local community. Forty-two years of longing and searching for him had not been in vain. God works in mysterious ways, and God's timing is the best. It always is.