

## Unique Evangelism in Africa

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*Hanna is guiding the New Hope singers of Bangui (Central African Republic) singing at the public conference*

After our central figure, Mary Bizot, came home to the Central African Republic from the 40-day training in New York, we were all very inspired to do our best in order to advance God's providence.

We were able to record two television programs, one for Easter and the other for the May 1 celebration of the 27th anniversary of the Unification Church. Both were very well received.

As we found out later, even the head of state watched our Easter program. Everyone seemed to appreciate our New Hope chorale. In New York, Mary had some T-shirts printed with the red Unification Church symbol and "A.U.C.M. Bangui," which made a good effect (A.U.C.M. is the abbreviation of the French for Association for the Unification of World Christianity, our legal name in Central Africa).



*Gregory Novalis*

In May we were authorized to have a regular broadcast on the national radio. Here in Central Africa, the radio is even more important than newspapers or television, since only a privileged number of people own a television set, and those few are only in Bangui, the capital. Yet with the radio, we can reach most parts of the Central African Republic. Some travelers coming from other towns to Bangui visited our center, being very curious to learn more about this "new religion." Now, every Tuesday morning people throughout the Central African Republic hear "Tongil," and more importantly, they are able to listen to the Divine Principle.

Since February we have been in contact with a local church leader who studied Divine Principle and became inspired by it. He has helped us obtain permission to use the television and radio stations.

On May 30, we met the president of this nation and spoke to him about the three main goals of the Unification Church: (1) to unify Christianity; (2) to raise up the standard of morality, especially among the youth; and (3) to counter atheistic and materialistic ideologies.

The following day Gregory Novalis, our regional director, arrived. This time he stayed with us for ten days, longer than usual, in order to assist at our first public conference, which was planned for June 7, Pentecost Sunday, at the local Protestant Youth Center.

For days and weeks before, we had struggled to get flyers printed. It is hard to imagine how many obstacles can come up. Still, we had a true Unification Church-style campaign, just like a mini-Madison Square Garden rally. Our brothers put up posters in all public places and decorated nearly all the trees along the road. We visited pastors and churches to invite Christians to share the "New Horizon of Christianity" with us. Our brothers and sisters also went from house to house, and radio and television announcements publicized the event. On the morning of June 7, we had an "electronic Sunday service" to commemorate Pentecost, followed by an interesting interview. This was also a very good witness for the evening conference.

About 400 people came to the event at the Protestant Youth Center. We had put up a giant red Unification Church symbol, painted on a big white sheet, just like in Madison Square Garden. Our "Growing Hope" chorale did its best and received very warm applause. Most importantly, everyone present was surprised and deeply moved by the honesty and sincerity of Gregory Novalis' message.

Gregory said that to achieve unity even among the people present, who were already all Christians or believers in God, is very, very difficult because we have to overcome immense barriers of the past and present: barriers between black and white races, between missionaries and Africans, barriers of resentment. He put the cards open on the table and spoke realistically as no other evangelist (white or black) had ever done in Bangui or perhaps in the whole of Africa. Gregory further explained that in order to overcome these barriers and achieve unity, we need two elements: love and truth.



*People of all ages and from all churches were attracted to the conference on African Christianity*

But how can love begin? Love begins through pardon and repentance. He then repented publicly for all the sins and crimes white people have committed against Africans both during the past and at present. Many persons were openly and genuinely moved. He asked for forgiveness in the name of the white ancestors and the white "men of God" who came to Africa in the past, as only tears of repentance can wash away the problems of the past.

Also, he said that the disunity of the churches in Africa is a reflection of the churches' situation in Europe and America. This disunity between Christian brothers is mostly based on cold hearts, so God needs to heat up our hearts before they can be melded together.

Another mistake of European and American missionaries who came to Africa has been their failure to distinguish between the Christian message and the European culture. One does not need to give up the African culture in order to become a Christian, Gregory declared, because Christ's message deals with the hearts of men and not with external aspects of culture. White missionaries coming to Africa should be in the position of servants. They come to serve; thus they should never ask an African to polish their sandals or to wash their clothes, but instead, they should be washing the clothes of their African brothers and sisters.

The second ingredient for unity is truth. Some might say that since we all believe in the same Bible, churches should be able to unite around the Bible. But the past 2,000 years of efforts in that direction were fruitless, and just the opposite happened. The more the Christians studied and tried to understand the Bible, the more confused they became; as a result of differing interpretations of Bible passages, they cut themselves off from each other. Today, in the 20th century, we need a new and higher expression of truth, one that is able to unify and strengthen Christianity. This new expression of truth must come from no other source than God Himself, by way of revelation.

At this point, Gregory declared the Divine Principle to be God's revelation to our True Parents in our time and invited all to come to investigate and study the Divine Principle. Also, he spoke firmly against church leaders who try to stop their fellow Christians by accusing Reverend Moon and the Unification Church of being antichrist and heretics. He invited everyone to judge for him- or herself.

After his speech, which found a grateful and sympathetic response, we showed the film, "Reverend Moon: the Man and the Movement." Everyone could see our True Parents projected bigger than life on a huge screen. The audience was surprised and amused by Father's dramatic way of talking. African people like that. Also, they were truly amazed to see the great crowds at our Father's rallies. After the conference, we distributed questionnaires and literature. Only a few people tried to heckle or disturb the meeting.

The week after the conference many people came to the center. We organized an "evening of friendship" and a two-day workshop to receive them all. Our goal is to have many more active members, in order to expand God's work in this nation; we know that all our public activities can be recorded as a victory in history only if many hearts return to God and True Parents.

We are immensely grateful to Heavenly Father for His help, encouragement, and support, to Gregory Novalis for his inspiration and guidance, and to all the brothers and sisters in our region who supported us with their heartfelt prayers. Our only prayer is that this can be the spark that kindles the holy fire in the hearts of men and contributes to the unification of African Christianity and, finally, of all humankind.