

## FFWPU USA: 20-year-old Cheon Il Guk Missionary's success in Albania

Naokimi Ushiroda  
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"I didn't know anything about Albania when I first arrived," says Miae I. "What kind of culture or traditions it had; and what surprised me the most was learning about its communist background."

Traveling more than 4,700 miles away from home in Philadelphia, Penn., 20-year-old Miae arrived in Albania in early November 2021. After two years with Generation Peace Academy ([GPA](#)), she joined a team of Cheon Il Guk ([CIG](#)) missionaries sent there for witnessing and related activities.

"In America, we have one-on-one Divine Principle study, but in Albania, we go out with a survey that has a few questions," says Miae. The survey is a way to gauge where recipients stand regarding their views on life, faith, and God before more information about the Unification movement is shared with guests at the local [CARP](#) center. Out in the field, Miae experienced challenges in an unfamiliar country.

"My first two-and-a-half weeks in Albania I didn't meet anyone," she recalls. "But as we engaged more people and the community, we noticed that the young people are searching for something deeper," she says. "They're seeking purpose in life since many come from a place where historically there wasn't religion. Now they're ready and open to discover more about themselves and life."

With just under three million citizens, Albania, an Adriatic nation on Southeastern Europe's Balkan Peninsula, spent the second half of the 21st Century under communist rule. In 1976, it became the People's Socialist Republic of Albania and fell out with most of the world's communist powers, including the USSR and People's Republic of China. By 1990, the nation's communist regime had collapsed.

"Some older generations in Albania may still have that kind of mindset," notes Miae, "but we've met so

many young people who are searching for purpose and answers.

On Nov. 17, Miae met Elda.

"Elda was out jogging," says Miae with a laugh. "But she was kind enough to stop and fill out my survey. Then we saw her again later and she was so interested in learning more about CARP and learning more about us in general."

Elda, a 17-year-old high school student, was intrigued by the friendly team. "I was really curious about Miae, who was still smiling even in the face of rejection by some people for the survey," says Elda. "I really liked her energy."

A meeting of the minds - and heart - soon led Elda to devote her free time to learning more about the Unification faith and the teachings of the movement's founders, True Parents. She experienced a newfound understanding and appreciation of life after a four-day Divine Principle workshop.

"Before I met Miae, I wasn't sure about what I wanted to do with my life," says Elda. "But the workshop was really the best experience of my life. Coming to the CARP center every day makes me very happy."

It's even inspired Elda's Muslim family.

"I come from a small family, with an older sister and younger brother," says Elda. "My mom practices faith in an informal way, just praying from her heart... Whenever I go home and tell them everything I've learned, they're so amazed. They support me every time I participate at the center."

For Miae, it's an incredible testament of faith to gain a young "spiritual daughter" so quickly. "When we first met, Elda said she's been thinking about the purpose of life throughout her whole life," says Miae. "When she learned later that I was her spiritual mother, she looked so shocked. But in that moment, there was so much joy and warmth and we embraced. I realized this is why I'm witnessing, this is why I'm investing everything to restore God's ideal."

The pair of soul sisters now fundraise and witness together. Naomi Froehlich, the CIG Missionary program coordinator, says Miae and Elda embody "a witnessing movement coming to life."


"We're a movement that empowers the youth of each nation to build Cheon Il Guk and create that substance," says Froehlich, who met Elda in January while accompanying a second team of missionaries sent to Albania. "These kinds of moments and transformations make it worth it, to really experience God and True Parents, and their course, their vision, and hope."

"We experience eternal love and truth when striving for the vision of total salvation of humanity," she says. "When we see these young people taking this step to stand as representatives of True Parents and testify to them, we also see the reality that every person we meet matters."

For Elda, finding faith has been a life-changing opportunity to go in a new direction. "I want to be more grateful and work toward the purpose I was given," she says. "I want to work more on myself, go witnessing, and give lectures, though I still need to practice. I want to dedicate my time and my life to this and even possibly go on a mission after school. It's a really amazing feeling to share with new guests about God and True Parents."

Miae couldn't agree more. She says missionary work has strengthened her heart and resolve while deepening her faith. "Despite how difficult and challenging witnessing can be sometimes, the absolute joy that comes from it is so much greater."

You can learn more about CIG missionaries [here](#).



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