

Bringing God's Highest Truth to a Land Governed by Fear – Part 3

William Connery
November 16, 2016

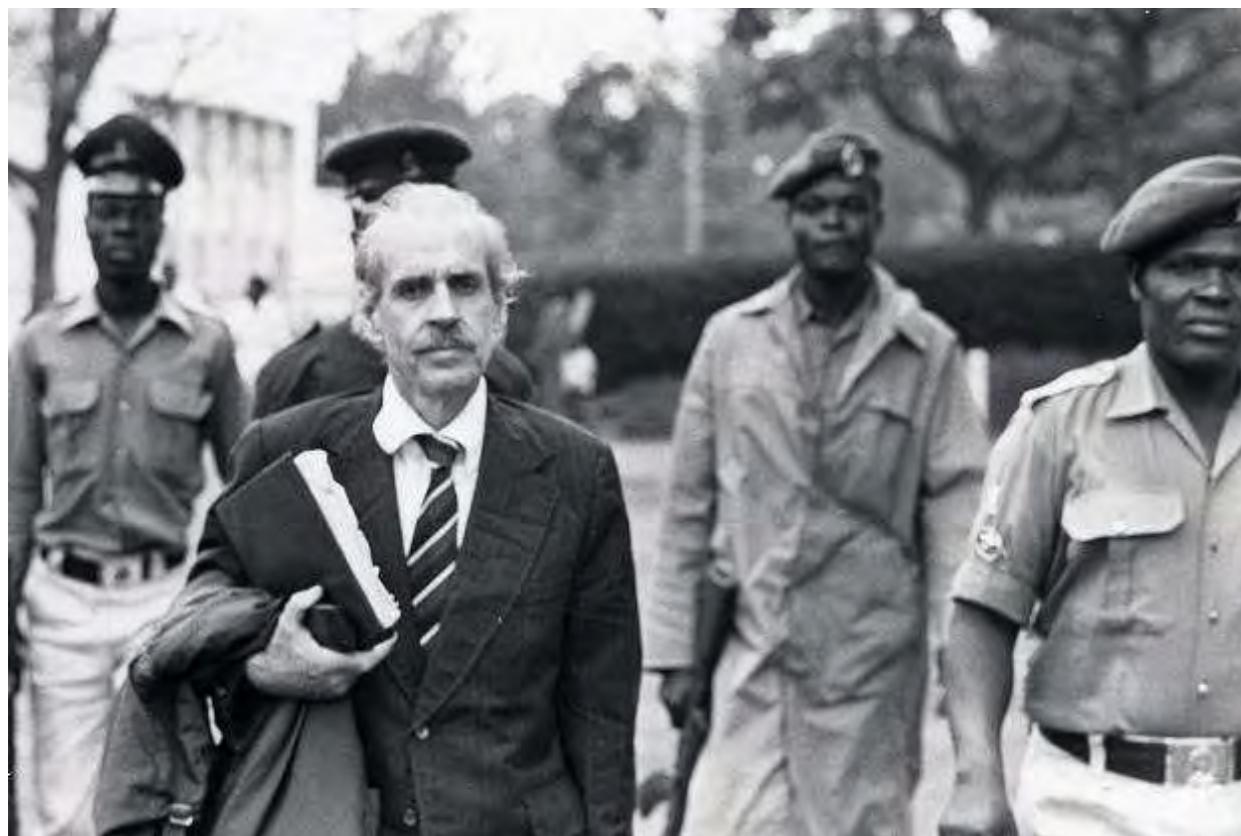


William Connery, missionary to Uganda

July 27 began as a usual Sunday, with Ulf and myself holding 5 am Children's Pledge service. This we held every Sunday and first day of the month, as was traditional with all Unification Church members. Luckily the apartment where we stayed was near a street lamp, so we never had to use our own lights and possibly attract attention from any passers-by.

Ulf left 9:45 for service at the Protestant All Saints church. I left 10:30 for mass at Christ the King Church. The two young men I usually spoke with were busy, so I met a new person, Charles, and we went to a small park near the City Hall. I began to teach him the Principle of Creation, which I had put on 3×5 index cards. While we were talking, a very flashily dressed young man walked by us once and quickly returned. He asked what we were doing, and I said we were studying how religion and science could be united. He asked for our I.D.'s, where I was living, and confiscated some letters I had been writing. He left us alone and I quickly returned to the apartment. Ulf

was just finishing teaching Michael, a young man Ulf had met about two months before. Michael was a Christian, even though he was of the same tribe and actually a cousin of President Amin – he eventually became the first native member to stay with us. Michael quickly left and I told Ulf what had happened in the park.



State Research Bureau men with Bob Astles, a Briton who worked as an advisor to Idi Amin

We were still in the process of wondering what was the best course to take, when the young man came to the apartment with two fellow members of the Security Forces. We were in the hands of the State Research Bureau (S.R.B.). Henry Kyemba has written:

The State Research Bureau – the secret police – was set up as a military intelligence agency to replace Obote's bodyguard ... they steal money from their victims; they are paid lavish funds by Amin as a reward for gathering information. ... They do not wear uniforms. Typically, they dress flamboyantly in flowered shirts, bellbottomed trousers and dark glasses. ... I have estimated the number of deaths over the past six years as 150,000 plus. This is well within the range of killings that Amin's thugs could have achieved.

Abdul was also at the apartment and all three of us were arrested. All of our belongings were confiscated and we were put in the backseat of a vehicle. We were driven to what appeared to be a vacant house near All Saints Church. The driver went in for a few minutes, came back out and drove on. Next we were

driven to the three-story building, which had the external appearance of a motel, where most of the S.R.B. victims were beaten and eventually killed. Our driver again went in and again he came out after a few minutes and drove us away. He continued driving us around until it got dark, in an attempt, we felt, to try to confuse us. We were finally brought into a small room located on the first floor of the S.R.B. living quarters. The three of us were left alone for a while; then they returned, frisked us, and accused us of working for the CIA and plotting to overthrow the government. The first young man was sure I was with the CIA because I was wearing a white shirt!

All of Amin's forces were hypersensitive during this period – the Organization of African Unity was meeting at Kampala during that same week. There had been some bomb threats against government installations: there was some method behind the madness of our being arrested. From the very beginning Ulf was demanding contact with the West German Embassy (there was nothing either Abdul or I could do -- there was no Bangladeshi Embassy and the American Embassy had closed down in November, 1973). Our captors kept telling us that everything had been taken care of. At one point, Ulf was ready to tell them that we were missionaries. But I said no, that we would keep our identities as tourists trying to stay in the country and also during our captivity, we would fast from all food.

It was truly a life and death situation, with Ulf trying to teach the Divine Principle to Abdul, with both Ulf and myself trying to prepare our souls for whatever might happen (possibly expulsion or death), and all three of us trying to cope with our captors who came in once in a while to question us. Actually I felt that God protected us very much, because we were never physically abused by our captors. We spent Sunday evening and all of Monday locked up in our small room. Our captors brought food for Abdul on Monday; they seemed quite shocked that neither Ulf nor I were eating. Early on Tuesday, Ulf mentioned to me that we would probably be released with apologies. I had no idea what would happen.



New members in Uganda play volleyball

About 11:00 am we were taken to the Crested Towers (the headquarters for the Ministry of Education) to check on someone, but they were not in. We were returned to the room, and then taken out again 1:30. We were driven back to our own apartment, where we could clean-up and shave. Then we were taken again to Crested Towers, where we met the Permanent Secretary for Education. He gave us an official government apology and hoped that nothing had happened to us.

Ulf and I were grateful to God that we were unhurt and able to remain in the country.

We never figured out the full details of our arrest and release. Any white man was suspect at that time, especially those having contact with the native people. Also we felt that Abdul's being a lecturer at a local college was the reason that all three of us were released through the good grace of the Ministry of Education.

Immediately after our release Ulf and I checked at the West German Embassy: they had never received any word about us! They told us to check all our belongings, submit a list of missing articles to them, and

check with them at least every other day. We did get most of our belongings back, although most of our more valuable things and all of our foreign currency were gone. Ulf's had been in cash and was lost forever -- mine was in traveler's checks, which I eventually got refunded through a local bank.

That Wednesday (July 30) I returned to my usual schedule of meeting with friends and attending choir rehearsal – no one seemed too curious about my absence. On Friday (Aug. 1) I went to N.S.S and met the headmaster: he promised to get my tourist visa extended. Later that day I attended the Revival Fellowship at Nambarembé, where I again met the headmaster and Sepia K., who was the actual owner of Nakasero Secondary School (The school had originally been an Asian school – Pilai's – but it had been taken away from the Asians in 1972 as a result of the 'Economic War' and the Expulsion of the Asians). Later that evening Ulf and I saw Yasir Arafat pass us in a car [Editor's note: he was in Uganda to attend one of Amin's weddings, as the "best man"].

On August 4 I revisited the Permanent Secretary at Crested Towers; he sent me over to the Chief Education Officer. He told me I needed a form from the Ministry of Internal Affairs. The next day I got a Special Form from the Immigration Board. They then needed a copy of my University Diploma (luckily in our Barrytown Training we were told to bring a copy of any college diplomas we might have. Also another missionary in New York told us that we should keep 80 percent of our money in traveler's checks). I re-contacted the Immigration Board on Aug. 7 and I was, at last, granted a three-month extension on my tourist visa (Uganda was a place to learn patience).



Archbishop Janani Luwum

On August 8 I met one of the great modern saints and eventual martyrs of Uganda, Archbishop Janani Luwum of the Anglican Church of Uganda (officially the Church of Uganda). He was attending the Friday Revival Fellowship at Namirembe. Brother Andrew said this about the Archbishop:

Luwum became a minister during the East African revival which swept Uganda before Amin came to power, and rose rapidly through the ranks of the church, becoming the archbishop in 1974 at a ceremony in Kampala's Namirembe Cathedral. A photograph of the ceremony still hangs in the conference room of the Church of Uganda, showing Luwum with a smiling Idi Amin offering congratulations.

But that was in earlier and better days. As the pattern of violence against Christians developed in the time since then, relationships between Amin and the country's spiritual leader became increasingly strained. The plight of Luwum and other church leaders was a familiar one in countries where the Church is suffering: to speak out against the persecution was to incur greater hostility, and, in Luwum's case, even personal danger.

Although he was the Archbishop, I felt that Janani Luwum wanted himself to be treated like just another "brother in the Lord."

August 10 I attended 11:00 Catholic mass and sang in the choir. Afterwards one of the members, whom I had been teaching for two months, said that my presence was no longer needed in the choir. I felt immediately that people knew about my arrest and feared for their lives. I could not really blame them. Still, I felt hurt inside. Later that day I visited a friend and his family: I did not return to the apartment until 8:15 in the evening, really upsetting Ulf. Because of the desperation of the situation, I decided to

make a 400-hour no-food fast (that is over 16 days without food). Before leaving America, someone had asked Rev. Moon -- "Father, I was wondering if there are any special spiritual conditions which we can set in our country?" He had answered: "Fasting or some kind of a concentrated special prayer, in conjunction with deep concentration of your thought will be good. "There's no necessarily uniform condition, but whatever individually feels good to you; there's no right pattern." Ulf decided to join me in this endeavor.



The three Uganda missionaries – William, Ulf and Hideaki

The beginning was not too bad: I had accomplished three-day and seven-day fasts before. On the tenth day Ulf had to give up – he had begun passing blood in his stool. I kept on going, even though my energy level was decreasing and I felt like I had a fist of fire in my stomach.

On Aug. 19 I received a letter from the Immigration Board, requesting a teaching license and a letter of recommendation from the Permanent Secretary. I later visited him: he was away but his replacement seemed very responsive and ordered me to return with a copy of my diploma and a list of subjects I would like to teach. When I tried to sleep that night, my stomach felt like it was burning up. So I drank some water and prayed that God could give me some rest so I could do His Will. The next day I returned to the Crested Towers and the temporary Permanent Secretary wrote me a letter; he also said that if things did not work out at Nakasero Secondary School he would find me a place in another school.

I went to Immigration: they sent me back to Crested Towers because I still needed a teaching permit. I returned and received another form to be filled out by Nakasero Secondary School. The following day I went to N.S.S. – the headmaster was late because he had been beaten and robbed the night before. He told me that he was leaving N.S.S. to work at Makerere University in Kampala and I should work with the owner from then on. On August 22 I received my teacher's license and submitted all my papers to the Immigration Board – the man there said the Immigration Board would decide on my case within a week. Later that day Ulf told me that the Secret Police had visited the apartment twice. At 4:00 on August 28 I broke my fast (403 hours) with a cup of ginseng tea. September 1 I returned to the I.B. to check on my work permit. The man said it was still being processed and I should return in a week. I returned to the Immigration Board on September 8; they now said that my case would not be coming up until September 19. September 10 I visited Sepi K. at Makerere University: he called the Immigration Board but still no definite response. On September 12 a policeman came to our apartment. He asked Abdul some questions. Then he asked me about my job and looked at my passport; he said it was a normal investigation and would return later to see Ulf.

A cold and sore throat had been working on me for a few days: on September 18 I began coughing up blood, so I went up to Mulago Hospital (formerly one of the best in East Africa -- now fallen on hard times due to Amin's regime). I was taken to a doctor, who gave me four kinds of pills and cough medicine. Later that day I met Ulf back at the apartment: he had been rejected by the Immigration Board and would have to leave by October 24. He started a three-day fast to set a condition. I met Sepi K. the next day: he seemed confident and gave me the name of the Chief Immigration Officer and told me to

contact him in three days. On Sunday September 21 I visited a friend's family in a village outside Kampala. His parents were very hospitable people, showing me around their *shamba* (farm) and preparing me lunch. When I left later they gave me a large bunch of *matoke* (plantains) and a hen. The next day I went to the Immigration office and finally received my Work Permit, valid from September 10 1975 until September 9 1978! I quickly returned to the apartment and had a prayer of thanksgiving with Ulf; we were confident that through faith and prayer his situation would improve.

The next day began another chapter to test my toleration level. Now that I had a work permit, Ulf and I also felt confident that we could get our own accommodations. Thus began my relationship with the Departed Asian Custodian Board (D.A.C.B.), which was in charge of all the property which the Asians had been forced to leave behind after their expulsion in 1972. By 1975 there was no new building in Kampala and the population continued to increase. Some of the young men I visited were living in rooms that had formerly been servants' quarters; sometimes whole families were living in converted garages. On September 23 I first contacted the D.A.C.B, and went there at least two or three times a week until they found me an apartment in March, 1976.

I had my first day at Nakasero Secondary School on September 25. I sat in on a few classes and spoke to the headmaster; he needed two photos and two copies of my work permit. Also sat in on classes the next day and received my first pay-check (\$200 a month). On September 26 we established the first Holy Ground on Old Kampala Hill. By this time Ulf and I had discovered Hideaki, the Japanese U.C, missionary who had entered Uganda on May 26 – I had seen Hideaki on the street before our formal introduction. On September 29 I taught my first history classes. I had felt like a prisoner awaiting execution. Somehow I (and the students) survived that first day.