

Ernst Gerhard Bessell, Essen, Germany, 1970



My name is Reverend Ernst Gerhard Bessell. Together with my wife, Ulrike, who went to the spirit world on September 12, 2003 in Guatemala, we have eight children and nine grandchildren. We joined True Parents on October 7, 1970 after meeting the church on my birthday, September 18, 1970. We were the first to join the Unification Church in Germany as a family. I had received baptism just a little over two years before at a local church, and we had been married in the Protestant Church of Essen. Until today, I have kept my promise, and the verse given to me by my pastor from Romans 1:15-16 at that time.

Together with our first daughter we joined the Unification Movement, leaving everything behind, since we strongly felt the urgency that the kingdom should be built quickly. My wife abandoned her studies three months before graduating as a teacher in Essen, Germany, while I barely made it through the associate degree exam in economics at my university in Bochum. We donated all our belongings for the establishment of the mission. Of course, we gave everything gladly, because our young church owned very little at the time, and we lived literally like the apostles in Acts 2:44-45. Since we both decided to dedicate ourselves completely, we asked an elder blessed couple (43 couples) who kindly agreed to take care of our young daughter together with their blessed first daughter.

Unfortunately, our daughter was kidnapped and raised by in-laws in Germany.

As a leader with a national mission, I sent my wife to America at the end of 1973, when True Parents requested a “second wave” of missionaries for the International One World Crusade. While she stayed

eight years on a short-term visa, I first came to the U.S. to bring a group of students to the first international leadership workshop for students in 1974 in Barry-town, and then again to do the preparation for the Divine Principle video mission in 1976 after the Washington Monument Rally.

Having returned to Germany in November 1976, we were called to participate in the 35-couples Blessing (*kisong kajong*) in Belvedere (December 22, 1976). We had a special breakfast with True Parents where we dared to ask them (five times, I confess) for permission to go to Russia, since we were both fervently involved in anti-communist work (e.g., Freedom Leadership Foundation, Captive Nations' Committee). True Parents made us understand that we first had to complete our mission in America. After a turbulent year as a wandering pastor/teacher/itinerant worker in Germany, I came to the United States at the end of 1977 and together with several brothers and sisters we helped to buy and manage Master Marine for True Parents under the leadership of Dr. Paul Werner. Unfortunately, we were not able to secure permanent residence at that time and had to flee in order to escape the border police. The next four years we maintained our mission in responsible activities in various ways under different names.

We worked under the leadership of the beloved Chung Goo "Tiger" Park, who urged us to come back to Germany in order to help restart the Collegiate Association for the Research of Principles and unite the European regions. When he died, I was privileged to represent Europe at his funeral. Later, my wife and I were fortunate to be the regional leaders in Berlin when the rally to bring down the Berlin Wall ("*Die Mauer muss weg!*") was held under the guidance of Hyo Jin Nim and Rev. Won Pil Kim. By this time we had an additional six blessed children.

Our last son was born during the time our family established fish sales in northern Germany, after a second training period in Kodiak, Alaska. While our family was still involved in fish sales, I also served as

the regional leader for central Europe (Benelux, Austria, Liechtenstein, and Switzerland). In 1996 we received True Parents' recognition as a special contributing family (seven or more blessed children). Meanwhile, our son had already been received by the Federal President of Germany (Bundespraesident) as a godson.

My wife and I were privileged to serve as the leaders of the international group for the first National Messiah Workshop in Cheong Pyeong, Korea. After choosing Guatemala in the lottery in 1996, I immediately went to my new mission nation in order to welcome True Mother for the inauguration of Family Federation for World Peace and Unification. Our whole family joined in 1997, coming there on one-way tickets.

As part of the National Messiah providence we have been working in Guatemala since 1997. Here we established the Embassy for Peace in 2003 in Guatemala de la Asunción, the capital city, which is only 300 meters from the "Plaza Berlin," where we recently celebrated the 20-year anniversary of the fall of the Berlin Wall and where I personally met the Ambassador of the Federal Republic of Germany. I am eager to contribute to *Cheon Il Guk* in a practical sense, working for the most part in edifying the circle of Ambassadors for Peace on the national level.

We are very happy and proud to have been able to establish an educational project in Santiago Atitlán, Departamento de Sololá, Guatemala, (see www.propazgua.net) and to help develop the mission which was so intensely fought for by many missionaries, those who came before us and those who worked with us. We were very fortunate to maintain a vivid and beneficial relationship with the elder-brother nation. This allowed us to receive much grace from heaven as we cooperated for many years on projects like Religious Youth Service (RYS) and in receiving our Unificationist religious and academic leaders for educational purposes. Our family was given a prize as national messiah in 2004. I received my Master of Divinity degree in 2008 at

Unification Theological Seminary and am almost at the end of the Doctor of Ministry studies (ABD).

I visited my original hometown of Dresden in Eastern Germany shortly before moving to Guatemala. I feel a strong calling to include the area of my forefathers in our mission. Since my home town of Dresden was bombed out in February 1945, all the great social work of both my grandparents' couples seemed lost. After the Wall came down, a little of the former work could be retrieved. If I have a chance, I want to establish an area of peace exactly where they used to live in Dresden, just beside what is now the Technical University.

As a young boy after World War II, I looked up to the United States as the Promised Land where the "care packages" came from. Today, most of our children's families (two of our children are native-born Americans, two others have American spouses) live in the United States (Bridgeport, Connecticut; Charlotte, North Carolina; and Bowie, Maryland) and even I, after a third attempt, with the help of our children, finally was able to get a permanent-residence visa to work and live freely. As a family we have been trying our best to build bridges, especially between Europe, North America, South America and Korea, with a hope to finally span the whole world for *Cheon Il Guk*.