

## Unificationists in Angola build their first church

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*Until recently, building a church was unthinkable in this province devastated by war*

Angola is a country with a tropical climate in southern Africa, where it shares its northern border with the Democratic Republic of the Congo and with the republic of the Congo (Congo-Brazzaville). In the south, it abuts Namibia. In the east, it borders Zambia and in the west Angola's Atlantic Ocean coastline stretches for 1,600 km. (1,000 mi.).

Angola was a colony of Portugal for five hundred years before liberation in 1975. Unfortunately, after its independence, the country was oriented toward communism with Marxism Leninism as its ideology. Furthermore, the country went through a civil war for almost thirty years, which finally ended in 2002 with the death of Dr. Jonas Malheiro Savimbi, who was one of the leaders of the opposition political party, UNITA (National Union for the Total Independence of Angola).

Angola has many natural resources such as the oil, diamonds, copper, manganese, fish and timber. It is a country with a religious foundation.

Despite the influence of communism after its independence, almost 70 percent of the population is Christian. We also have some indigenous religions. The country has eighteen provinces and the official language is Portuguese; however, languages abound in Angola, such as Kimbundo, Kikongo, Kiokwe, Ngangela, Ibinda and Umbundo. Our president is Jose Eduardo Dos Santos; he has been in power since 1979. Some call him "the architect of peace."

### **Our Angolan church history**

Before 1994, the providence to restore Angola was pioneered by two couples who came from Brazil one after the other but who left the country principally because the country was in a state of war at that time. In 1994, Mr. Alberto Capita and I, came from the Democratic Republic of the Congo (then called Zaire), where we had been living like Angolan refugees for several years. We were sent back to Angola to start a new mission, knowing that we were sons of the country and must succeed at all costs. Thus, we were intent on enduring any difficulties. Fortunately, with the support of the spiritual world, we could establish a foundation.

In 1995, with the coming of a Korean couple and nine Japanese woman members of the Women's Federation for World Peace, the providence was about to move from its pioneer phase to the definitive establishment of the providence. Unfortunately, in the midst of war, which had again torn the country apart, we were able to deploy our efforts only in the capital and one other city, Lubangu, in the southern province of Huila. We could work in only a few provinces, such as Cabinda and Benguela. Given that freedom of movement in the country was severely restricted, the only safe means of transportation was aerial, but this was also very expensive. We therefore concentrated nearly all of our activities in the capital of the country, Luanda.



*Rev. Futila (center) and Rev. Pedro (blue suit) at the opening of the church*

### **The Angola mission expands**

After definitive peace in 2002, the country entered a new stage. We could already notice peace in all the national territory. Despite this, it was not easy to set up other mission sites in the provinces because of the bad state of the roads, antipersonnel land mines and the rural exodus -- most of the population had left the provinces to live in the capital. The government had to start to rebuild the nation. In the ten years after armed conflict ended, the streets had begun to be reconditioned, which allowed us to consider launching missions in provinces where no missions had yet existed. In provinces where members had laid a small foundation, we were able to empower them.

### **Our church in Uige Province**

Uige is one of the provinces where the civil war had raged strongly. It had been under the control of the rebel movement (UNITA) for more than ten years. This province shares a long border with the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The civil war nearly destroyed the streets. Reaching Uige from the Luanda, which is 370 km (230 miles) away, required two or three days, sometimes in a vehicle, but mostly walking. After the government rebuilt the streets, it only takes five hours.

In 2007, the military posted Mr. Adolfo Martins Mavinga, a member blessed among the thirty-thousand-couple blessing group, to Uige to fulfill his military service. We started a pioneer mission there, which benefitted from him and his family being there. Because the province is close to the capital, sometimes members of the national headquarters staff visited the province to help empower the families and to witness to new members. Right now, in Uige Province, we count thirty-six full time members and eighty-two members spiritually associated to the church and to whom we are teaching Divine Principle. In 2010, the headquarters in Luanda, through the national leader, asked members in Uíge Province to look for a place to build a provincial headquarters church. Members answered the call by reporting that they could buy an empty field for U.S. \$700.00. Even though the national headquarters contributed a symbolic amount, donations from members in Uige -- above all a very large contribution from Adolfo Martins Mavinga and his wife -- made this purchase possible.

The construction should have started the same year, especially as we had two strong young men whom Mr. Adlofo had taught civil construction skills. Their contribution was a huge benefit once construction did begin.

Thus, using the members' contributions, they began to purchase construction materials and members mobilized themselves to contribute their own effort to the creation of the provincial headquarters church. Along the way, they never ran short of difficulties. They had to find water a bit farther away because the building site itself lacked a water source. Sometimes members even had to work at night to save time.

Even though the national headquarters helped in one way or another, the greatest effort came from the dedicated members in Uige, especially the individual efforts and sacrifice of elder member Adolfe Martins Mavinga.

Finally, on August 30, almost two years after the national headquarters had initiated the project, Futila Di Mayeko Michel, the sub-regional leader of Central Africa; and I, as Angola's national leader, were physically on hand for the opening of the Uige Province headquarters church.

## **Serving the community**

We took advantage of this occasion to donate food to the Uige Provincial Tuberculosis Hospital, an act that the local media covered. Our aim was to think of others, in line with True Parents' vision. Nevertheless, strategically, taking a public stance in caring for our neighbors in this way increases the credibility of our organization generally, because the province and society wants to see this type of humanitarian outreach. In addition to wanting to satisfy the practical needs of others, we wish to open the gate widely for our witnessing activities.

## **The Uige mission leader's testimony**

Mr. Nsilulu luzayamo, a blessed member and leader of the Uige mission gave the following testimony:

I am Angolan, too, but I was refugee in the Democratic republic of Congo. I returned to Angola in 2011. I was in another municipality in the Uige Province; the city of Uige, which is the provincial capital. I contacted Rev. Pedro at the headquarters in Luanda and he introduced me to Adolfo Martins Maviga, and with him, I started raising funds for the church. I have experienced that anything is possible with unity. Beginning construction seemed like a joke when we first proposed it; seeing the number of members that we had, we wondered if we could build something in less than three years. Especially because the majority of our members don't have a job that guarantees they can contribute more than willpower or courage or dedication and sacrifice. Above all, with the encouragement of the national leader, we could achieve something.

Of course, it is not a very beautiful building, but at least we have a clean area where we can pray and organize our providential activities. Finally, we invited some public figures (political, religious and social) to attend the inauguration. The people that came were not the ones expected, but I understood it is not at all easy.

The person chosen to cut the tape was someone related to the local government but he was not in our original plan. Nevertheless, because he responded positively to our call, I personally requested that he lead the official opening of our headquarters. In conclusion, I understood that with faith, obedience and absolute love, we can do big things, especially in the providence of restoration.