

**A Unification Church Missionary's
Testimony**

“A LIFE NOT MY OWN”

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A LIFE NOT MY OWN

Introduction

My name is Christopher Paul Olson. 51 years ago, I joined the Unification Church in San Francisco, CA. It was late March, 1970, and I was 21 years of age. Five years later in May of 1975, I left America to become a Unification Church missionary in order to serve the world and to convey the new truth of the Living God. Although 47 years have passed since I departed America as a 26-year-old missionary, I find my heart finally calling me to share my memories and testimony at my current age of 73.

Over the years quite a few brothers and sisters asked me why I hadn't written a book about my missionary years. I always smiled and replied, "perhaps someday." I always knew that I wasn't gifted in the written word and the task of conveying deep life experiences seem to me daunting. The truth of the matter is I felt that the offering of my missionary years to Heavenly Parent and True Parents was, in many ways, inadequate and unworthy. I knew that my faith was true and my obedience to True Parents was total, however my original mind and my heart scolded me for my faults and my fallen nature.

True Father asked at a gathering of missionaries, meeting in New York in February, 1980, to write our testimonies. At that time, as requested, I did write and submit a few pages of testimony. However, as I now reflect on my years as a missionary, I feel my initial testimony was limited as it only included the first five years of my experience. Recently, True Mother has asked us to reflect on our missionary experience and write our testimonies. Repentant before True Mother, I have committed to begin writing my story.

I would like to mention a distinction between my missionary years and those of my fellow missionaries. Most missionaries gave their service to a specific country, and in some cases a second or third. For reasons beyond my comprehension, Heavenly God sent me to many nations all over the world. In total I offered my heart with humility and

prayers in 27 nations. I was assigned to and resided in six nations, from start to finish: Indonesia, Australia, New Zealand, Chile, Colombia, and Mexico. In addition to being a national missionary, I was eventually assigned as a regional director for four regions of the world: Oceania, the Southern Cone of South America, Northern South America, and Central America. These four regions included a total of 21 additional countries: Papua New Guinea, Vanuatu, Solomon Islands, Fiji, Tonga, Cook Islands, Western Samoa, New Caledonia, Argentina, Paraguay, Uruguay, Venezuela, Ecuador, Peru, Bolivia, Guatemala, Honduras, El Salvador, Costa Rica, Nicaragua, and Panama. Needless to say, I was on the road much of the time and spent an average five to six months of each year visiting our precious missionaries and their members. I feel so grateful to our missionaries for I saw firsthand their sacrifices and tearful efforts.

The missionaries that were sent out in 1975 were meant to be pioneers to their nations. That is to say, to be the first representatives of our True Parents and to introduce the holy truth of the Divine Principle to the people of that nation. However, there were a few countries already pioneered prior to 1975. In this sense, I was not a pioneer to my first mission country of Indonesia. A Dutch couple, Johan and Elke van der Stok, had already pioneered Indonesia since 1971. Johan had been born in Indonesia in 1937 when it was a colony of the Netherlands and had even been imprisoned with his family during the Japanese occupation in World War II.

One can well imagine the difference between arriving in an unknown country as a pioneer with no foundation whatsoever and, in my case, arriving to a welcoming embrace. It goes without saying that the van der Stok couple became a wealth of knowledge and advise about our new home (i.e., culture, language, history, character, etc.). I am certain that my pioneer brothers and sisters, who arrived at their destinations with no foundation and from the point of zero, suffered and paid much greater indemnity than myself. Surely their tears and lonely hearts are recorded in Heaven. Furthermore, it

turned out that Johan van der Stok was my brand-new brother-in-law as I had just been blessed with his younger sister, Margarita, three months prior.

In May of 1975, one Japanese, one German, and one American were to unite as missionaries and work together to restore a nation. These selected trinity missionaries were sent to various countries the world over. This restoration turned out to be easier said than done. Just one generation earlier our fathers tried to kill each other in World War II. I don't think that any of us new missionaries at that time truly understood the historical and vertical significance of what we were to experience. Our True Parents sent us out to the world to pay indemnity, to suffer, and to partake in real restoration.

I have often thought that the American missionaries had an advantage and a head start in dealing with the variety of cultural, language, and background issues that we had to confront. From 1973, True Parents brought hundreds of European and Japanese brothers and sisters to the United States. Most of the American missionaries were able to work together for two years with not only Japanese and German members of our church, but also French, Austrian, Dutch, and British brothers and sisters. Consequently, when we missionaries arrived in our countries, we had the benefit of two years of cultural diversity training. On the other hand, our Japanese and German brothers and sisters had no such preparation, if they did not already experience it in the USA. It certainly would have been much more confrontational and challenging to deal with the cultural barriers that they encountered. I feel that they probably suffered and paid more indemnity than the Americans. Of course, in addition to this, was the cultural shock of blending into an entirely new world of the assigned mission nation.

I should mention one more important aspect of my missionary years. I was blessed in marriage in February of 1975, just three months prior to my departure to the nation of Indonesia. What was amazing for me was that the nation I was selected to go to happened to be the nation where my wife was born. Indonesia was formerly a colony of the Netherlands and my wife, a Dutch national, was born in 1949 in its capital,

Jakarta (formerly known as Batavia). Was this just a coincidence? I didn't think so as missionaries were sent out to over 100 countries and I happened to be selected for the very nation of my wife's birth.

In any case, my wife and I remained separated for almost five years, and she was never able to join me in Indonesia. These first five years of my mission were filled with the longing for my wife to join me. There was no shortage of regular supportive correspondence from Europe that kept my spirits high. I can say that my missionary years were divided between my five solitary years and our thirteen years of missionary life as a couple. My wife finally joined me in New Zealand where we walked the missionary life together as a blessed couple. Eventually, over the years, we bore two sons and three daughters and, thus, became a missionary family. This meant that not only myself and my wife but also my children had to endure the historical and vertical realities of sacrifice and indemnity. Although this might sound a bit sad, the reality is that missionary life was a blessing from God given to us and our offering was made with deep gratitude.

As I reflect on my 18 years of foreign missionary work, they were the most meaningful and beautiful years of my entire life. I thank the Living God for entrusting me with the many peoples and nations of the world. As I write this testimony, my heart is moved to tears as I reflect on the many years of trials, tribulations, and blessings.

A new beginning and my departure

In early February, 1975, without a mention of foreign missionary activity, I left America for Korea together with a large group of brothers and sisters from our church. All I knew was that I was to be considered to be a candidate to receive the holy marriage blessing to be decided by our True Parents. As if in a dream, within a week I was both matched and blessed to a wonderful sister from the Netherlands, Margarita van der Stok.

As it turns out, Margarita's entire family, including her parents and four brothers, were all members of the Unification Church. Two of her brothers happened to be Unification Church missionaries at the time; Johan in Indonesia and Wouter in South Africa.

Shortly after the blessing, Father Moon was scheduled to give a major speech at the Budokan Arena in Tokyo, Japan. For this reason, our entire group of American members traveled from Korea to Japan in order to participate in and support this important event. It was while in Japan that I was first informed of our True Parents decision to send out over 100 missionaries (from the USA) throughout the world. I later learned that Japanese and German missionaries would also be sent out.

I was asked to write out on a small piece of paper three choices of countries that I would like to be assigned to. After a short while of thinking and praying about this decision, I concluded that it wasn't my decision to make. How can I possibly choose! I didn't ask to go out as missionary but was being directed to go out by my living God through our True Parents. Therefore, I decided to let Heaven make the choice. I ended up writing on my small piece of paper: "any country is OK." Heavenly Father gave me to Indonesia.

Upon my return from Asia to the USA, I was invited to attend a church leadership conference at our Belvedere training center in New York. As I arrived at this meeting, I was still quite excited about my new mission assignment to Indonesia. One can imagine how surprised I was when a senior American leader informed me that a change had been made and I would no longer be going to Indonesia. The reason given was that the American Unification Church could not afford to lose such a large amount of its leadership. In the blink of an eye, I had lost my new mission before it even had begun. This decision devastated me as my heart was already set on becoming a foreign missionary.

The leadership conference got under way under the direction of Rev. Moon and, as usual, True Father began by speaking for several hours. I have to admit that my mind

wasn't able to concentrate very well due to inner struggles concerning the news of my mission change. I felt conflicted between my own desires and the central teachings of my faith concerning self-denial and unconditional obedience to God. In order to free myself from this struggle, I decided to bring it to Heavenly Parent. I prayed that it would be acceptable if I requested to keep my foreign mission assignment with the attitude that I would receive whatever decision with gratitude. I hoped that my offering would be received whether on the altar of America or the altar of Indonesia. I never considered myself as a bold person but I decided that I would stand up at this meeting and directly make this request to Father Moon. I waited to what I considered an appropriate moment, when there was a pause in the proceedings, and called out to Father Moon: "Father, if it is possible, I would still like to go out as a foreign missionary". True Father looked at me for a moment, and with a slight grin replied: "OK, you can go".

Within a few days of being reinstated as a foreign missionary, I was sent to Barrytown, New York, to our newly acquired seminary property for 100 days of training. It was while in Barrytown that I, for the first time, could seriously consider my new mission. I really didn't have any concepts about being a missionary. Perhaps the advantage of my country of America being a "melting pot" of the world cultures had given me a glimpse of what was to come. Together with me in Barrytown were many of my friends who were also newly assigned missionaries. This was a wonderful blessing as we could share together our expectations, hopes, and even our fears. We even went out collectively to a local hospital to receive the variety of vaccinations and injections that our new countries required of us.

As I reflect back on these three months in upstate New York, I will never forget the frequent visits to our training by our True Parents. My love for our True Parents had grown so much in the previous 2-3 years and I knew that I wouldn't have the chance to see them so much in the coming years. Sometimes at night before sleeping I would pray for them to come and speak to us the next day. And a couple of times, they did!

I departed the USA in mid-May, 1975, on my way to Southeast Asia. To my surprise, my flight itinerary brought me to a stopover in Seoul, South Korea, for a night. My wife, Margarita, happened to be in Seoul at the time working with the International One World Crusade (IOWC), a team of international brothers and sisters. I was greeted at the airport by my wife and an American sister living in Seoul, Lynn Kim. Lynn informed me that I couldn't come to Korea without reporting to True Parents. I immediately called Mrs. Won Pok Choi, an elder assistant to our True Parents, and she asked me: "Why are you in Korea?" I replied that I was an American missionary on my way to Indonesia. What Mrs. Choi said then stunned me. She said that you can't leave Korea without first greeting our True Parents and that my wife and I should come to the Chung Pa Dong headquarters church the following morning to meet with Father and Mother Moon.

To this day I can never forget this most memorable experience that was given to me as a 26-year-old young man. Lynn Kim, my wife and I arrived at Chung Pa Dong the next morning and we were received by the president of the Unification Church, Young Hwi Kim. He ushered us into the residence and slid open the door to a radiantly smiling Father and Mother Moon. They were sitting on the floor in the middle of the room and my wife and I quickly offered our kyungbae (bow). I hardly knew what to think or how to act as we quietly sat in front of True Parents. At once True Father asked the question: "How is everything going in America?" I answered that all was going well there. This question by True Father made me realize where the heart of our True Parents was and how much they loved America. For so many years to come True Parents would pay incredible indemnity and sacrifice for the United States. Even True Father, although innocent, was later imprisoned in Danbury.

After about ten minutes of sharing, True Father asked how long I would be staying in Korea. I asked permission if I could stay 2-3 days in order to get legally married as well as to register our marriage at the US embassy. True Father agreed and

gave Lynn Kim some money to take care of us during our stay. After this experience I thought to myself that out of the hundreds of missionaries who went out in 1975, I was given such a precious send-off to my country by the True Parents of Heaven, Earth and Humankind.

My first Mission Country: Indonesia

I arrived in Jakarta, Indonesia on May 21, 1975. It was night time, but already the heat and humidity seemed overwhelming. I hailed a taxi and asked the driver to take me to an inexpensive hotel near the center of the city. Once in my room, I began to pray and asked for God's guidance and inspiration. I felt alone, scared, and quite inadequate for what was awaiting me. Suddenly there was a knock on my door and a hotel employee inquired if I would like a woman to be sent to my room. I replied that I was not interested and closed the door. Such was my first night in Indonesia facing my first test. The next day the phone in my room rang and the person on the line began to scream at me and shouted: "I will kill you! I will kill you!" I was shaken and confused as I hung up the phone. I didn't expect such trials to confront me this early in my mission. As I prayed, I reflected on True Father's early years when he had to endure "millions of satans" as well as torture in prison. At my age (26 at the time) True Father had been asked by God to go to North Korea to preach. I realized that, as I was to assume responsibility for a nation, indemnity would have to be paid. Although I felt as if I was in over my head, I was willing to offer my life. I also felt solidarity with hundreds of other missionaries who were certainly confronted with similar challenges as myself.

Indonesia is a nation having over 13,000 islands as well as comprising a multitude of different cultures and languages. The national motto is: "Unity in Diversity". In 1975, Indonesia was the 5th largest country in the world with a population of over a 150 million. Although an oil producing country (a member of OPEC), the level of poverty

was evident everywhere. Indonesia's per capita income was one of the lowest in the world. Indonesia was the largest Islamic nation in the world with well over 100 million Muslims. Christianity, Buddhism, and Hinduism seemed well accepted by the Muslim majority and the religious co-existence impressed me.

The climate was tropical with two seasons: wet and dry. The heat and humidity were constant and, at times, unbearable. Needless to say, that in such an environment there was an abundance of mosquitos, cockroaches, scorpions, spiders, and lizards. In the blink of an eye I had been transported from the most prosperous, comfortable, and affluent country in the world to the stark reality of third world poverty. This external physical change was much more easily digested than the internal spiritual change and going from a Western culture to an Eastern culture. Also, it may not seem like a big difference but I felt psychologically affected by just going from the northern hemisphere to the southern hemisphere. I felt like I was in a completely different world and all alone. To be honest, many of my tears in those early days were self-centered. As time passed by, I was constantly reminded that I was there to shed tears for the people and to liberate Heavenly Parent.

After two nights in the hotel, I was so excited to meet Johan and Elke van der Stok an elder couple in our church who were blessed in 1969. They had been on mission to Indonesia since 1971 and Johan was my new brother-in-law. They had one 5-year-old daughter, Johanna, and Elke was pregnant expecting a son. The church center was a humble residence down a narrow ally. In spite of its simplicity, I was so happy to be with church members and out of the hotel.

The German missionary, Margit Leising, had already arrived two weeks earlier and she was anxious to meet her Japanese and American counterparts. Margit was a bright young 19-year-old Bavarian girl, who had just joined our church one year earlier. She was filled with excitement and hope for our mission and her young faith inspired me. I felt God's heart and urgency to send out missionaries so young and inexperienced

as us. It became clear to me that God's providential timetable for the last days had come and that True Parents were following Heaven's instructions no matter whether we young folks were ready or not. In spite of the daunting task of saving a nation of 150 million people, we knew we were not alone.

Finally, our Japanese brother, Kasuya Kashu arrived a week later (we referred to him as Kashu-san out of respect). Like myself, he had recently been blessed in the 1800 couple blessing and he was about my age, both spiritually and physically. Kashu-san was very kindly and humble in his manner and he always had a beautiful smile. We all welcomed and embraced him and now, finally, our international missionary family was complete: five adults and one five-year-old child from 4 different countries speaking 4 different languages. Our mission began with such a challenging environment of our limited ability to communicate, not just with our words, but with our hearts. The motto of the nation of Indonesia, "Unity in Diversity", seemed to become our motto and goal as well.

Certainly, language was one of the first obstacles that we encountered. English became our primary language which made things much easier for me. Both Johan and Elke spoke perfect English, whereas Margit and Kashu-san understood enough English to communicate and get by. I appreciated Margit and Kashu-san's language challenges, imagining what it would be like for me to learn Japanese or German and, not to mention, our new Indonesian language of Bahasa. As it turned out, the English language would become a central element in our spiritual mission and activities. So many young Indonesians were attracted to learn English and to practice this new language with native speakers. I think that many of our new found friends and members came to us with this motivation. Of course, I can't overlook the more vertical and spiritual reasons why they came, such as the support of their ancestors.

I soon found that the biggest challenge to my new physical and spiritual realities was myself. I was confronted with the necessity to adapt to almost everything without

the convenience of my comfort zones. The modern bathrooms of the US were not to be found in my new dwelling place. The toilet was basically a hole in the floor where you could commonly encounter a cockroach or a scorpion. The shower was a cement basin filled with cold water with a handheld plastic dipper to splash water over your body. I am sure that this type of bathroom was common for billions of my brothers and sisters all over the world. However, for me, it was a dramatic new experience. Sleeping at night was also not a simple matter. A klambu (mosquito net) was necessary to avoid being eaten alive by the mosquitos. At night the lizards would cover the walls in their search for insects and, we would see an occasional rat scurry across the floor. Sometimes, as I was kneeling on the floor in prayer, I would catch some movement out of the corner of my eye, which would disrupt my concentration.

Restoration requires the paying of indemnity through building a foundation of faith and a foundation of substance. Recovering the substance of God involves removing the fallen natures through Cain and Abel relationships. I couldn't help but reflect on the historical and vertical responsibilities that we missionaries had on our shoulders. Just one generation earlier, my father fought in the US army, Margit's father fought in the German army, and Kashu-san's father fought in the Japanese army. Our three fathers tried to kill each other during World War II. Johan had been imprisoned together with his parents and younger brother during the Japanese occupation of Indonesia in the early 1940's. Now, here we were, praying and crying each day in our search for the cleansing power of true love.

Of course, there were times of disagreement and conflict between us missionaries but I personally felt a strong sense of unity amongst us and that our mission always came first. Initially the question arose: "who would be the central figure?" We decided that we would rotate the leadership position week to week. We would even integrate democracy in our planning and scheduling by having a vote. Eventually, through getting to know and trust each other, it was decided that I would assume the Able position. Still,

we would always work together as a team and share our varied ideas together. I can't speak for the others, but I only can recall one period of a few weeks that I felt isolated and a bit angry at my brothers and sisters. In hindsight, it wasn't anything said or done, but rather my own internal self-centered struggles. I can only imagine that the other missionaries must have, at times, struggled with me as well. I was spiritually immature and my heart was totally inadequate to embrace this special time in my life. I have to confess that, to this day, I wish that I could have given as much to our mission as Margit, Kashu-san, Johan, and Elke had.



Kazuya Kashu, Margit Leising and myself



Divine Principle workshop at a tea plantation

In my first months of mission, I struggled with loneliness. I realized that my commitment to the nation was total and that I might remain in Indonesia for the rest of my life. A life of self-denial took on a new meaning and I struggled with my weaknesses. I reminisced with memories of things past, perhaps like the Israelites did in the desert after leaving Egypt. Feeling alone and being alone are not the same. Although I felt alone, I was never really alone. I prayed a lot and our Heavenly Parent came alive more and more in my original mind and heart.

The major providential events of Yankee stadium and the Washington Monument rallies took place about one year after my arrival in Indonesia. Somehow our national mission seemed less urgent and our focus was very much directed toward our True

Parents and America. We decided to make conditions of indemnity in support of these historic gatherings and to protect our True Parents. We made a 40-day all night prayer vigil where each missionary would pray for one hour and then wake up the next person for their hour. We also did a 40-day relay fasting condition where we would take turns with one day fasts for the duration of the 40 days. These kinds of conditions united us and brought us closer and closer together in our mission. Our devotions were not individual but collective and this was beautiful and precious to me. I will never forget those conditions and they still remain vivid in my memory to this day.

Johan and Elke van der Stok had one dedicated member when I arrived in Jakarta. He was married with children and a member of the Indonesian military. He lived not far from our center and visited regularly. To me he represented the entire Indonesian people and I could learn the heart of this new culture through him. He was like a breath of fresh air to me. But how could we witness and get more members like him in a predominately Islamic nation? Witnessing openly to convert Muslims to another faith was not a realistic option and we had to find another way of sharing God's heart. We gradually found that many Indonesians were attracted to us simply because we were foreigners who could communicate in basic English. They wanted to become our friends and to practice English with us. Mostly younger people with a Christian background began to visit our center, especially students. Although a Muslim country, Indonesia had a relatively large Christian population including many ethnic Chinese Christians. We initiated the "International Friendship Club" as our central method of witnessing. A simple newsletter was started and we had a weekly "International Friendship Night" with a meal, singing, and a short inspirational message. We would also invite everyone to Divine Principle lectures and to our Sunday service. Initially, participation in our activities was rather humble, but through word of mouth we began to gather a few very good contacts. Our mission was still in its infancy but we felt Heaven's guidance and protection. There was such a small foundation upon which we stood, but I always had

the consciousness that we missionaries were God's only hope for the nation. New life and rebirth could only come to these 150 million people through our True Parents and I always felt the weight of this responsibility. Although always feeling inadequate, my strength was my faith and devotion to the cause of building the Heavenly Kingdom.

There were several changes in our first year of mission. Elke gave birth to a son which inspired a new joy for our small family. A short time later Johan took his daughter to England for her education and was unable to re-enter Indonesia because of visa problems. This was a big set-back and a very sad time for us. Although Elke was now separated from her husband, she decided to remain with us in Indonesia for the sake of the mission. We were very grateful that Elke could stay with us for the time being, although she would eventually return to Europe to rejoin Johan a few months later.

How to legally stay in the country became a constant concern. Visas were only given for a length of up to 6 months. Every half year we would have to depart Indonesia to the neighboring country of Singapore, apply for a new visa, and return to Indonesia one week later. I can still remember getting on the airplane in Jakarta with a desperate prayer to God to permit me to quickly return to my nation and my people. My mission was my life and purpose and the center of my identity. I'm so grateful that, unlike many missionaries, Margit, Kashu-san, or myself were never expelled from Indonesia. This meant to me that the representatives of our True Parents were welcomed and embraced by the nation of Indonesia.

There were always financial concerns about how to be able to live day to day. Although we received some money from our home countries, which we were so grateful for, it was not quite enough for the needs of our mission. In order to supplement our income, we did a bit of business as well as taking jobs teaching language. Even before I arrived in Indonesia, Johan had imported Il Hwa Ginseng products from Korea. Once a year we would set up a booth at a major international trade show and sell ginseng tea. The Indonesian people had a welcoming response to this herbal tea made from the

ginseng root, and we were able to earn good profits. Additionally, although we were not trained as language instructors, there was a strong demand for language lessons, especially in conversational English. I was able to teach in classrooms as well as give private lessons on a regular basis. This supplemental income allowed us to rent a reasonable house to serve as our church center. Heaven was certainly watching over us and taking such good care of us. Missionary life is a life of humility with no possessions, personal money or the like. Nevertheless, it is a life of abundance and deep personal joy. We never had for want in Indonesia because our calling and purpose was to live for others. Still there were always tears, loneliness, and struggle, but that is nothing new in a life of indemnity and offering. I continued to remain grateful, positive, and ready to move forward.

Our True Parents established a daily newspaper in New York City (The News World) just about the same time that the missionaries were sent out in 1975. We missionaries suddenly became international correspondents overnight and we were requested to submit articles on a regular basis. This excited me although I knew absolutely nothing about journalism or writing stories. I went to the United States Information Service (USIS) library in Jakarta and checked out a couple of books on an introduction to journalism. Although not very confident, I jumped into this new dimension of my mission hoping to be able to fulfill what was expected of me. Writing articles demanded that I travel to a variety of destinations in Indonesia in order to research stories, conduct interviews, and to take photographs. I wrote stories on tourism, volcanoes, earthquakes, martial arts, culture, and many other themes. I was so joyful when a News World editor sent me a copy of my first published article. In spite of this new found activity, my focus in Indonesia always centered on the religious sphere. I was sent by True Parents to give new life and salvation through the teachings of the Divine Principle.

Outside encouragement and support was a constant during my years in Indonesia. I received a regular stream of correspondence from both my wife and my mother. How joyful I was when a letter arrived filled with love and support. My wife and I offered a 5-year separation period after our marriage blessing and we were able to get to know each other and fall in love through our letters in my early missionary years.

There was a correspondence of a vertical nature that moved my heart and spirit. A monthly package of literature including True Father's recent speeches, were sent to all missionaries worldwide. For me, it was life itself to receive the inspirational words of our True Father's sermons. Sometimes I felt far away from God's Providence, but with the arrival of the word, I was always pulled back into the central flow of the Heavenly Will. I was able to reflect on many past experiences of listening to True Father's speeches in person and I realized how much I missed being together with True Parents. In a certain sense I felt much closer to them at a distance of thousands of miles than if we were actually together. Such is the realm of true love and heart. I still kept with me the memory of our True Parents receiving my wife and I in Korea and seeing me off on my missionary journey to Indonesia.



Members in front of Jakarta Church Center



Visiting a famous Buddhist heritage site in Central Java

Daily life in Jakarta could be confrontational and challenging. Sometimes I felt like I was wandering through the streets of the city lost and in a daze. The constant heat and humidity were unbearable and my shirt would be soaking wet with perspiration by mid-morning. The streets were dry and dusty and the dirt and grime would stick to my sweaty body. Getting onto the city's rundown buses was like getting into a sardine can. With so many bodies smashed together it would raise the heat index an extra 10 degrees.

Having grown up in an affluent country, the immense poverty that I saw all around me was staggering. Automatically, being western, meant that I was wealthy and had money. Dozens of beggars approached me daily and I gave what I could even though we missionaries struggled financially as well. Although I placed my life in God's hands and felt Heaven's protection, there was always an awareness of potential dangers. Twice I was robbed at knifepoint during my years in Indonesia. First by a group of about 10 young boys (~12-13 years old) who surrounded me and violently removed the watch from my wrist. It was raining and I fought for a bit with my umbrella but to no avail. At first, I was resentful and angry but within a day I could overcome my negative feelings and forgive them. The second robbery took place when, as I was walking in a remote area, I felt a pull to my wrist. As I turned around, I encountered a man trying to steal my watch. As I began to defend myself and pull away, I felt something sharp in my back and realized this thief had an accomplice. The sight of a 12-inch knife shocked me into submission and I quickly relinquished my watch. At such moments there is no time to even think but afterwards many feelings and emotions take over. At first there was anger and resentment but that night in my prayer I prayed for the assailants and forgave them. If we can't repent and forgive, we are lost in the wilderness of the fallen world. Such trials came to me during my missionary years which I never forgot.

I had read a couple of books about early Christian missionaries of the 19th century. A Christian missionary society in England sent out a missionary to a primitive tribe in Southeast Asia where he was killed and eaten. Within months a new missionary was

chosen and sent to the same tribe. This time the tribal chief's son was cured of a serious sickness by the missionary's medical knowledge, resulting in the entire tribe's conversion to Christianity. I realized that in Christian history God had called so many to go the path of sacrifice and martyrdom. Although the times are different today as we stand on the foundation of the merit of the age, we still must make the same unconditional offering as those who came before us.

It was evening time in June, 1978, and I was busy selling Ginseng products at the annual international trade show. Margit showed up suddenly to inform me that our New York church headquarters had contacted us and that I was to telephone them as soon as possible. I quickly went to the telecom building where I could make an international call. My life was about to change and I was shocked to hear that my mission had been changed and that I was to depart to Australia as soon as possible. So many thoughts raced through my mind as I wondered why such a change was happening. Of course, I was excited about going to Australia, but the realization of having to leave Margit and Kashu-san and my beloved Indonesia deeply saddened my heart. We missionaries had spent three years and one month together shedding tears and paying indemnity for the salvation of our nation. I couldn't help but feel remorse for not having done enough for the mission. I repented for the lack of substantial results and that my offering to Heaven was not enough. I was also so sorry to Margit and Kashu-san that now only two of the three missionaries would be left to carry on the mission without me. I left Indonesia with a heavy heart but also with great anticipation for what was to lie ahead. Although, at the time, I did not know that this was to be the first of five eventual mission changes over the next 15 years.

East to West and North to South

I arrived in Melbourne, Australia in June, 1978. Once again, I was confronted with the need to adjust and adapt to major changes. I was moving from an Eastern society to a Western society as well as from an island culture to a continental culture. Also, I had migrated ever deeper into the southern hemisphere. Everything seemed to be the opposite as it was in Indonesia. Language wasn't an issue any more as everyone spoke English and I jumped from the poverty of the developing world to the affluence of Australian society. I was taken aback in the initial days of my new mission as it was a real shock to my consciousness.

Once again, the change in climate overwhelmed me. June was the beginning of the Australian winter and I had just arrived from living three years in the tropical heat of Indonesia. My body needed many weeks to adjust to the colder temperatures and I was grateful to be gifted some warm suitable clothing by the members. I'm not sure if it was more difficult to adapt to the heat of Indonesia or to the winter of Australia. I'm so grateful to Heavenly Parent for giving me such a variety of environments in my life which allowed me to embrace the world in a more full and complete way. True Father always taught that getting too comfortable and settled was not conducive to spiritual growth and that the challenge of change was good for us.

Once again, I quickly discovered that I was not a pioneer and that I inherited a church foundation that was quite substantial. Suddenly I found 35-40 core dedicated brothers and sisters sitting in front of me asking for leadership, guidance, and instructions. In those first few days I prayed constantly for courage and inspiration to be worthy to care for and love these precious sons and daughters of God. Just days before I was settled in a small quiet center in Jakarta, Indonesia, and now I became not only a national leader but a continental director. I was humbled and questioned whether I was truly qualified for such a responsibility. Then I remembered that I was trained by our

True Parents for so many years in the United States through workshops, training sessions, and leadership experiences. I promised Heavenly Parent that I would take care of His Australian flock and work hard to save the nation.

There were not only Australian members in our church but brothers and sisters of many other nationalities who joined in Australia. There were brothers from France, Switzerland, Denmark, and Malaysia and sisters from New Zealand and the USA. We also had church centers in 5 cities across the country (Melbourne, Sydney, Canberra, Adelaide, and Perth). The size and magnitude of my mission became ever more real and I constantly asked for God’s guidance and inspiration.

Just as the Divine Principle teaches us about the “merit of the age”, I felt grateful to arrive in Australia on the foundation of the pioneer missionaries who came before me. A British and German missionary had come to Australia a few years earlier and had offered their indemnity and tears. Carl Redmond, a British brother, and Christa Jensen, a German sister had been sent from Europe in the early 1970s and they had already sacrificed so much for their new nation. I deeply respected them and soon came to rely on their advice and counsel. It must not have been easy for them to have a new and young American leader come and suddenly take over the responsibilities that they themselves had been bearing for years.



Christa Jensen, myself and Carl Redmond



Leading a service in Melbourne, Australia

I soon came to realize why I was summoned to Australia and the reason such a sudden leadership change came about. With the desire to give God's revelation to the world, our European elders decided to send out missionaries. Germany sent Christa out to the city of Melbourne and England sent Carl out to the city of Sydney. Unfortunately, without adequate communication and coordination the two missions began independent and separate from one another. Subsequently, two distinct and unique church communities grew and expanded. When this situation came to the attention of our True Parents the direction was given to unite the two church communities into one with Carl Redmond to become the central figure. As you can imagine there were growing pains, conflicts, and many internal obstacles that didn't allow for unity to come easily. Eventually it was decided that a new national leader would be assigned and, for a reason only Heaven knows, I was called to the task. I must say that I came to deeply love both Carl and Christa and appreciated their absolute devotion and commitment for the sake of the nation. I'll never forget the wonderful support they gave to me during my short time in Australia.

The history of God's providence of restoration is one of separating from Satan through paying indemnity, and life in the Unification Church is often the frontline battleground in the war being waged between God and Satan. The U.C. is comprised of imperfect, sinful members who make mistakes along the path of salvation and kingdom building. What I experienced in Australia was what I considered "Real Restoration". Although the brothers and sisters were absolutely faithful and devotional members, I couldn't feel the spirit of unity. Problems that persist over time don't just easily go away and disappear. I felt a pull from two sides trying to sway and influence me in one direction or the other. I simply listened, observed, and prayed for a week. I asked Carl, Christa, and various members for their advice and thoughts on our Australian mission. I decided to give a workshop and I summoned the city leaders from around the country to

Melbourne. It was the coming together of about 20-25 members in order to introduce ourselves to each other and to make a new beginning united as one.

I had considerable experience as a lecturer of the Divine Principle and that weekend I taught from my deepest heart to awaken the spirit that we were one family under God. I explained to them that I was inadequate to be their leader but that I would do my best to serve and guide them and that I needed their full support. I taught them that the only way to save our nation was not through Carl or Christa or even myself. It could only be our unconditional obedience to our True Parents that could give hope for our mission. I expressed my deepest respect for Carl and Christa and said that we would work together hand in hand. After this workshop the spirit of our church family began to change and I felt Heavenly Parent smiling down on us. There is nothing like the feeling of hope and possibility and I was inspired as I began my new mission.

I made no major changes to the activities of our church as I could see that the brothers and sisters were sacrificial and worked very hard. I have to say that these beautiful members taught me as much or even more than what I was able to give to them. Our traditional church activities consisted of witnessing, fundraising, Sunday services, and workshops. I soon traveled to the other four centers of our church to meet all the members and to give sermons and teach the Divine Principle. Flying around this huge continent never ceased to amaze as well as humble me.

In Melbourne we had a witnessing and lecturing office in the city center. A team of several members would bring people to the office and a lecturer would teach an introductory lecture and invite them to a workshop. Workshops were held almost every weekend and, one by one, new dedicated members would join.

Our church took a new direction when our True Parents instructed us to focus our activities on “Home Church”. Each member was to become a tribal messiah and was given their own community of 360 homes to serve and love. This new witnessing approach was organized on the national level and traditional street witnessing was no

longer emphasized. There was an adjustment period for home church and I personally struggled a bit with this change. Street witnessing brought instant results whereas home church needed a much more long-term investment to gradually save the people. Over time, it became clear to me, that home church was an inspiration given by Heavenly Parent and the providence of tribal messiahship was ushered in on the earth.

We had other small foundations in Australia. In the spirit of Ocean Church and fishing, we had a small boat. Additionally, we had a printshop where church literature could be printed. We also had an import/wholesale ginseng tea business that was quite substantial. Three brothers were given the full-time mission to sell ginseng products throughout the country. This business proved quite successful and gave good financial returns to support church activities and expenses. For outreach, I established a small musical group of six members to reach out to the community through song. They traveled to different cities and performed at senior centers and other venues.

As a national representative of our church, I began to be invited to international events. I traveled to Boston for the International Conference for the Unity of the Sciences (ICUS). I also attended church leadership meetings with our True Parents. I will never forget the joy of fishing for 1000-pound tunas off the coast of Cape Cod with True Father. Whenever I had to give a report to True Parents, I always had to testify to the hard-working brothers and sisters who were shedding tears for God's Will "down under".

A wonderful New Zealand brother joined at that time who owned a large acreage of land in the countryside outside of Australia's capital city of Canberra. He gifted this property to our church and I began plans to build a training center there. The inspiration that came to me at that time was "education". We were given a most beautiful environment for learning and study and I quickly organized a national 21-day training session inviting all brothers and sisters. In this vast forest of gum trees were all varieties of unique Australian wildlife. Wallabies and kangaroos were jumping around and a

colorful array of cockatoos, rosellas, and other parrots were everywhere. I would awaken from my tent each morning in awe of the majesty of the creation before me. Perhaps I can imagine what True Parents must have felt when they beheld the creation in the Pantanal in Brazil. Our members emerged from the three weeks of training renewed and ready for the challenges that awaited. Although we were but children, we had faith that Heaven's Providence would guide and lead our way forward.



Close encounters with Australian wildlife

Unfortunately, I had to endure visa problems in Australia as their immigration laws were quite strict and rigid. In applying to re-enter Australia, while in New York, my visa request was denied. I didn't give up and traveled to London to re-apply for my visa. After much prayer I was finally able to receive the visa and to continue my mission. I was relieved and overjoyed to be allowed to continue to serve Heaven in my chosen country.

For the moment I was able to stay in Australia but my immigration problems continued on. In the late 1970's our church was negatively accused of being a "cult" and began receiving persecution in America and throughout Europe. Many accusations and rumors of brainwashing and the like made their way "down under" to Australia. The result was that after trying to re-enter Australia after traveling abroad, I was denied

entry, arrested, and put in jail. I spent two days in jail, was put before a judge, and was ushered out of the country on the next available flight. After only one and a half years, my mission to Australia abruptly came to an end. I was deeply saddened and depressed by this sudden turn of events and I would deeply miss Carl, Christa, and all of my brothers and sisters. Of the six mission countries that I would eventually be assigned to, Australia turned out to be my shortest serving assignment (18 months). Nevertheless, I have so many unforgettable memories of my short time in Australia and I am grateful that Heavenly Parent entrusted me with that mission at that time in providential history.

From a Continent back to the Islands

In late 1979 I attended a church leadership conference as a missionary without a country. Suddenly at the end of the conference, with everyone exiting the room, the director of the world mission department instructed me to remain behind. At once, I was alone in the room sitting 5 meters in front of True Father and Rev. Kwak. They spoke together in Korean for about 5 minutes presumably about my recent departure from Australia. Father Moon stared intently into my eyes the whole time as he asked a few questions to Rev. Kwak. I did not know what to think and I felt like a child about to receive parental guidance. Finally, the short meeting ended and Rev. Kwak stood up and spoke the words: “You go to New Zealand”. I was no longer without a nation and I felt deep gratitude to receive my new mission directly from True Father.

I now found myself going from a continental culture back to an island culture. Whereas Australia had a very hard, masculine character, New Zealand was much softer and feminine in nature. New Zealand had the slow-moving feel of the Pacific Island cultures and many Samoans, Tongans, Fijians, etc. resided in the country. With a population of only 3 million people residing on 2 islands, the country was also the home of 60 million sheep. Perhaps the biggest change of all was that my wife, Margarita,

would be joining together with me after 5 years of separation. Now we would journey together on our missionary path, sharing many adventures for the next 13 years.

After the painful experience of my visa problems in Australia, I wanted to prepare a more legal entry into New Zealand. Following a short stay in the USA, my wife and I entered New Zealand in April, 1980. Because New Zealand is such a small country, I was able to arrange a meeting directly with the Minister of Immigration. I was received warmly in his office and I made the request to be granted a religious visa as a missionary. I shared information about my religious affiliation and how I would be grateful to serve our church congregation in his country. He replied that there was no reason not to grant such a visa and directed me to the local immigration office where the application and paperwork could be done. For the first time in five years, I was able to enter a country as a missionary with a legal foundation. This was a blessing from God and I began work in my third mission country with my wife.

Once again, I was not pioneering a nation but inheriting the foundation established by others. Several years earlier a missionary was sent from Germany and Heaven led many young members to join our church. I was fortunate to inherit a good foundation of 30-35 dedicated brothers and sisters residing mostly in the largest city of Auckland. I wondered why I was never able to pioneer and was always given the foundations built by the sacrifice and indemnity of others. I think that Heavenly Parent knew my character and felt that I was better suited for the raising up of brothers and sisters and follow-up care.

Not unlike Australia, I soon realized that there were many internal problems plaguing our New Zealand church. Many members were struggling with their faith and some were even leaving our church. In my first days I decided to have one-on-one meetings with each member in order to evaluate the reality of our church situation. I was shocked when one brother candidly said to me: "We don't need you here.... Why don't you go back to America?" I simply replied: "I've only been here one day and you don't

even know me yet. It is only right that you at least give me a chance.” I didn’t take this exchange personally as I was well aware of the invisible vertical dimensions of restoration. In fact, this brother eventually came to love and respect me.

I concluded that our members were spiritually tired out and had lost much of the vision and hope that they once had. The church had incurred a very large financial debt and most brothers and sisters had been fundraising for a long period of time. There was a very strong sense of Cain/Abel struggle and I realized that we would have to have a revival of spirit in our community. I wrote a report to our church headquarters in New York sharing my concerns about the state of our New Zealand mission. I reported that a period of healing was necessary and that I would be emphasizing the spirit of “renewal and restart”. The outreach and expansion of our church foundation would be paused and put on hold until a process of cleansing and purification of our offering was realized.

As in Australia, I made no dramatic decisions or changes until I could earn the trust and respect of the members. I listened a lot and asked for recommendations and advice from some of the senior members. I taught workshops, gave sermons, and offered internal guidance education. The church had a board of directors (5-6 members) which would meet once a week to discuss and vote on church matters. Of course, I would attend these meetings which were often quite lively and emotional. These gatherings were of great benefit to me as I could observe firsthand the realities and needs of our church. Although I was the central figure, I remained patient and allowed them to carry on their democratic voting procedures. I prayed a lot and asked for God’s guidance and inspiration.

Gradually my wife and I began to gain the respect of brothers and sisters and a new freshness emerged in our church community. After just a few short weeks a wonderful breakthrough happened! At the weekly board of directors meeting the senior members said to me: “This is ridiculous! You are our central figure and leader and you should make the decisions.” I told them that I would do my best to represent our True

Parents before them and that I would still appreciate any advice and council they could offer. For me this was like a Jacob/Esau moment of victory and a foundation of substance for our New Zealand mission.

Our New Zealand Church had many assets which included both properties and small businesses. We owned two church centers in Auckland, a rural property for workshops, a printshop, a ginseng tea shop, and a deer farm. True Parents invested directly in the deer farm and one brother was responsible for this business on his father's large sheep ranch. I came to realize that my mission was not only of a spiritual nature, but that I was also to oversee these many physical activities of our work. Kingdom building on the earth took on a new meaning for me as I assumed the burdens of finance, debt, and business decision making.

Fortunately for me I no longer bore the responsibilities of mission as an individual but as a couple. My wife, Margarita, was now with me and we walked together on the way of God's will. In difficult times there was always support and words of encouragement. Our lives and those of our future family were not our own but were given as an offering to something much bigger than ourselves. We didn't consider our lives as being sacrificial but rather as being blessed by God. Gratitude comes to mind as the overwhelming feeling that we felt in those precious missionary days.

Of course, my wife could embrace and love our membership in a different way than I could. A family consists of both a father and a mother and church leadership is much more comprehensive when there is a couple. Especially my wife could help resolve problems that were unique to sisters with her motherly love. In January 1981 our couple became a family with the birth of our son, Maniyer. I asked our church headquarters if True Father could name our son and 2-3 days later a name was given. What a blessing! After an 8-day ceremony to dedicate our son, I had to depart New Zealand for almost 5 months to attend a 120-day training session in New York. Once

again, I realized that even my family was not my own but belonged to Heavenly Parent. I barely had time to hold my newborn son in my arms and then I had to say goodbye.



Starting our family in Auckland, New Zealand

The four-month training and education that I received in New York was a great blessing and an expression of God's love for us missionaries. How could we give life to others if we ourselves were inadequate in the realm of heart? I emerged from the training with a fresh faith and determination to give my life in service. Upon my return to New Zealand my five-month-old son didn't know or recognize me, which came as a shock. Such is the nature of a missionary family as even children at a young age become offerings in God's providence. In a sense, our children lead a missionary life as part of a missionary family making them missionaries themselves.

About the same time that we began our mission in New Zealand in 1980, I was assigned as the first regional director of the Oceania region. This meant that my responsibilities expanded beyond just the national level and that I would be required to embrace and care for several other countries. Gone were the days when I could focus on

just one country as now my attention had to be directed toward a region of 10 nations scattered through 1000's of miles of the Pacific Ocean. When I reported to church headquarters in New York that there were 3-4 island nations in my region without missionaries, I was instructed to send missionaries myself from our established missions in Australia and New Zealand. I announced to all the brothers and sisters in Australia and New Zealand that Heavenly Parent was searching for candidates to become missionaries in Oceania. I asked them to submit an essay sharing their reasons and motivations to become a missionary. After prayer, I chose and sent out 6 missionaries, 4 Australians and 2 New Zealanders. It wasn't easy for me in making such decisions for I knew well the burdens that missionaries must bear as well as the eternal implications of introducing the Divine Will of God centered on our True Parents to a nation.



40-day regional training in October 1982, near Auckland New Zealand

As these missions were in their infancy I felt called to visit and support them as much as I could. These tropical countries were small islands with little population. One country, the Cook Islands, only had 30,000 inhabitants. These island nations in Oceania were remote and far removed from a fast-moving world. It was only natural for the missionaries to feel isolation and loneliness. I can never forget visiting the solitary missionaries spending a few days with them in prayer and companionship. They were pioneers and bearing the heavy burdens of national restoration. As I departed each country after my visits and left the missionaries once again on their own, I was always moved by their faith and courage. These were just humble young brothers and sisters (early 20's) willing to sacrifice and offer their lives. Once again, as through all of my missionary years, I felt that the faith of my brothers and sisters was perhaps even greater than my own faith. I think that Heavenly Parent always challenged and inspired me through those around me and I was grateful for that expression of God's love.

Oceania was only the first of four missionary regions that I would eventually be given responsibility to care for. As I look back now, I feel so much remorse to my God for having to rely on someone as inadequate as myself. Simultaneous with my public mission there was always the other present reality of my own personal battles and struggles. The history of restoration is a history of separating from Satan. As a missionary you go out to save the nation and the world but so often, I realized that the nation and world that I went out to save was actually saving me. I was being resurrected from death to life all the while and this overwhelmed and humbled me. There was no comfort zone in my missionary life as the environment and challenges were constantly changing and causing the limitations of my heart to expand. Heavenly Parent put me into unknown territories and dimensions that I had not yet previously known, and I was forced to confront myself all the time.

Just as we study in the Divine Principle that historical figures were given trials and tests to overcome in their quest for faith and substance, so too is our life of trials on

earth. Our portion of responsibility is to know the moment and to remain true to our calling. We have to bear that which sometimes seems unbearable and continue along the path alone with humility and gratitude. I always kept in mind that it was precious to be alive on earth and to be able to serve and attend our True Parents. My life had purpose and meaning, and that was something that so many people didn't have.

The trial of worldwide persecution against our church arrived in Australia and New Zealand in the late 70s and early 80s. Accusations that we were a brainwashing cult hit the newspapers and created a big stir all around us. Many couldn't understand that a young person could hear a series of lectures and dramatically change their life overnight. After all, that is what happened to me ten years earlier. I was witnessed to and invited to a weekend workshop on a Friday and on Sunday night I dedicated my life to God and True Parents. Who can understand and fathom the personal experience of religious conversion and rebirth? I can remember teaching a lecture on the "Mission of the Messiah" and one young man listening began to weep uncontrollably, so much so that I couldn't continue the lecture. Such is the power of the revelation of the Divine Principle to touch the hearts of those prepared.

As the many rumors and accusations continued against our church, it was only natural that the parents of our young members would react and visit our church with their concerns. It wasn't easy to meet with these fathers and mothers, reassuring them that their sons and daughters were in no danger and simply following their new found faith. I found the best way to deal with these parents was simply to witness to them. I challenged them to see for themselves what their children are doing by studying our teaching of the Divine Principle and by attending a Sunday Service or a weekend workshop. Not all of the parents understood but many became supportive and quite close to our church.

It came as a shock to us one evening when a brick came crashing through the front window of our living room where a large group of our members were gathered. We

could hear the shouts cursing the “Moonies” as the perpetrator’s car sped away. Fortunately, nobody was injured from the flying glass and debris. Many brothers and sisters were naturally upset and angry at those who attacked us and took this experience personally. I also was initially angry, but soon realized that this was a moment to reflect and forgive. I explained to the brothers and sisters that we shouldn’t harbor resentment or ill-will but rather forgive them for they didn’t know what they were doing. The Christian lesson has always been to forgive so that we also can be forgiven. Our True Parents also showed us so many examples of forgiving one’s enemy.

It was Sunday morning about one hour before I was to deliver a sermon to our congregation when my wife went into labor. I quickly asked a senior member to prepare a sermon and then departed to the hospital. Later that day my daughter, Heidi, was born giving great joy to not only my wife and I, but to our entire church membership. My wife and I were the only blessed couple in New Zealand and our son and daughter were the first of the many second generation to be born in that nation. As far as I was concerned our young family was an offering on the altar of serving the nation and the world as missionaries. Most young couples are settled down with stability when they start a family but missionaries are without a settlement. My wife and I had no money or possessions and we eventually would move from country to country over the next 10 years. This was not a concern because we had faith and a deep sense of purpose that was guiding our lives. I had already been a missionary for 8 years when my daughter was born and I was the happiest I had ever been in my entire life.

In late 1982 I organized the first of many regional 40-day training sessions that I would eventually convene over the next ten years. Through the years I had always put education at the center of church growth, both internally and externally. Internally, brothers and sisters needed to solidify their faith and externally we needed to grow our membership. About 50 participants from Australia, New Zealand, and throughout Oceania attended this international event held at our rural property located about 1½

hours outside of Auckland. The training session content consisted of three cycles of the Divine Principles, Unification Thought, Victory Over Communism (VOC), a variety of internal guidance lectures, and blessing education. Also, prayer services with sermons were offered each morning. The basic structure of the training revolved around the formation of groups of 7-8 brothers and sisters where daily give and take interaction, discussion, and sharing could take place. We concluded our 40 days with an all-night prayer vigil offering our training session and recommitting our lives to Heavenly Parent and True Parents.

In early 1983, my religious visa expired by law and it could not be renewed. I was informed that if we stayed more than three years that we would become residents and eventually citizens of New Zealand. Even though we were required to leave I was grateful that the country embraced our True Parents' representative for a period of three years. I have to testify that our New Zealand brothers and sisters were devotional and hardworking and always an inspiration to me. I was proud to take a large group of them to New York to be blessed at Madison Square Garden in 1982. In three years, we went through so much together including both tribulations and rebirth. My life was transformed in New Zealand with the arrival of my wife and the birth of two of our children.

I had informed missionary headquarters of our visa situation and was informed to return to New York to wait for new instructions. We were leaving our mission without a final destination not knowing what awaited us. It was as if God was saying to us: "Just follow Me and I will lead you where to go". It was hard not having a mission and just having to wait in New York for a few weeks. I struggled with impatience and wondered where Heaven's Directions would take our young family. Our son was two years old and our daughter was only three months as we awaited in a small room in the New Yorker Hotel. Finally, the decision was made and we were assigned to the South American

nation of Chile. We didn't know it at the time, but this would begin a period of the next ten years of missionary service to Latin America.

From the Eastern Hemisphere to the Western Hemisphere

In early 1983 my family arrived in Santiago, Chile, to begin our new mission. Geographical and cultural change is always challenging and Latin America would provide a wonderful opportunity to broaden our horizons. It appeared that the Southern Hemisphere was where we were meant to be and Chile, like New Zealand, was one of the most southern nations on the earth and the closest to Antarctica. Chile was a Spanish speaking Catholic country, well-educated and rich in natural resources.

We were received by American, German, and Japanese missionaries who had already invested so much heart and effort for the Chilean people. The American missionaries, Regis and Nancy Hanna, had recently been reassigned to Mexico and my wife and I were to replace them as the national leaders of the country. We would continue to work together with German and Japanese missionaries, Wolf and Brigitte Osterheld and Mr. and Mrs. Suzuki. Just like me, these missionaries had gone out 8 years earlier giving their hearts to the world missions. I had a deep respect for them and truly felt a bond of solidarity as a fraternity of missionary brothers and sisters. Although I was the new director of our Chilean mission, I felt humility and gratitude to be able to work together with them.

It quickly became apparent upon our arrival at Santiago airport that our new country was not as tranquil as New Zealand. Many soldiers with automatic weapons were present everywhere and the tense security atmosphere caused me to wonder about how safe this country was. At that time, Chile was governed by a military dictatorship led by Gen. Augusto Pinochet. Many segments of the population were opposed to this government and worked actively against it. Students would protest and demonstrate

regularly, and when there were power outages, I was informed that it was insurgents bombing the electrical power grids outside of Santiago. I tried to look at the political situation in Chile from God's point of view and I knew the hope of the nation rested in the spiritual and religious sphere of God's Divine Plan. The truth shall set you free and so I came to Chile with no other agenda but to teach the Divine Principle. Fortunately, I was granted a religious missionary visa by the government and was able to legally go forward to teach and serve God's Chilean sons and daughters.



Two missionary families (Olsons and Suzukis)



Chilean members in front of church center in 1983

We had a nice two-story house that served as our church center and a group of 6-7 devotional full time members dedicated to our mission. Language became an immediate concern for me as these wonderful brothers and sisters could not speak English and I could not speak Spanish. In the ensuing months, as my wife and I plunged into the study of our new language, our German brother Wolf, served as our interpreter. It frustrated me greatly to have to speak through another to express myself and I felt True Father's heart realizing the many years he had to use an interpreter to share his heart in America. I have to testify to my brother Wolf, who served so patiently as an intermediary between

the brothers and sisters and myself. He translated my Sunday sermons and conveyed my thoughts and feelings at our mealtime conversations.

Through daily language study and the taking of some classes, I could gradually begin to speak in broken Spanish. Nevertheless, during my entire two years stay in Chile, I would continue to struggle and wrestle with the learning of a new language. Patience has never been one of my virtues and I was often frustrated by what I considered inadequate progress in my Spanish studies.

I began my mission in Chile as the national leader, but also assumed the role of regional director for the Southern Cone region of South America. Our region consisted of Argentina, Uruguay, Paraguay, and Chile. Regional directorship meant that my focus had to go beyond one country and that my prayers and heart had to be spread out to a larger area. I thought of Saint Paul, who took responsibility as a missionary on the Mediterranean regional level.

You may imagine that all South American countries have the same exact culture as they share a common language and the Catholic religious traditions. I found this not to be true as each country had its own unique history and character and even slight differences in the Spanish language. I considered it a great blessing to be able to work in so many countries as it provided me the opportunity to embrace a multitude of different environments and cultures. I think that Heavenly Parent wanted to stretch and expand my heart so that I could learn how to love in a more universal way.

In order to more quickly familiarize myself with my region I decided to organize a regional 40-day training session to be held at a church property located outside of Buenos Aires, Argentina. Although this was only supposed to be training on the regional level it quickly transformed into a continental training with members from as far away as Colombia arriving to participate. As far as I know, it was the first such 40-day training session (outside of Brazil) given in South America and about 100 participants gathered at our beautiful countryside venue.

History, unfortunately, has been filled with disputes over territory, sovereignty, material wealth, and ideology. Every part of the world has experienced this and South America is no exception. Many wars have been fought in South America shaping its borders and creating biases and nationalistic feelings. I felt like our training session was a microcosm representing the historic challenges of real restoration for our continent. Although our brothers and sisters were beautiful and devotional members, a process of vertical indemnity carried out horizontally had to be confronted. Of course, we need to love our countries but not at the expense of separating ourselves from one another. For 40 days we learned that we were all sons and daughters of the living God and, therefore, brothers and sisters beyond boundaries.

I convened the 40-day training with the help and support of two American missionaries, Tom Field from Argentina and Steve Boyd from Uruguay. As I was quite new to South America, their presence and counsel was gratefully received. An Argentinian sister, Monica, was assigned as my interpreter and stood beside me for 40 days as I lectured and taught. Teaching with a translator was so difficult as there is a constant starting and stopping process in what you want to express, not just for the lecturer, but for the students as well. I realized that I had to learn the Spanish language as quickly as possible.

I wanted to personally meet with as many of the members as possible and so I posted a sign-up list for anyone who wanted to meet with me for sharing and counseling. I was surprised that 50-60 brothers and sisters signed up to talk with me and I was able to meet with 10-15 a day for the next few days. It was during these meetings that I could feel the heart of God and discover what I was meant to learn from our 40 days of separating from Satan. Of course, everyone suffers from fallen nature and original sin and brothers and sisters came to me seeking guidance to alleviate the burdens that they bore. Confessions of specific sins were offered as well as the general problems involving a lack of faith, Cain/Abel, chapter two, etc. This was a humbling experience for me and I

felt completely inadequate for the task. Who was I to guide these precious children of God when I myself still had my own lackings and limitations? Nevertheless, I offered the guidance that I had been taught in my church life and reached out to my brothers and sisters as best as I could. I felt that this training session became the “Providence for the Start” for what was to become my next 10 years of missionary service in Latin America.

The political situation in Chile made me feel uneasy and worried about our mission. Once, when out with my wife and children, we saw a large group of people running toward us making a big commotion. They were university students demonstrating against the Pinochet government and they were being chased by riot police. In an instant the young students passed us, all while throwing projectiles at the police. The police continued to pursue them with their clubs and shields and our young family found ourselves in the dangerous midway position between these two angry groups. We quickly ducked into the entryway of a residence until the danger passed and a calm prevailed. When confronting such danger, you can either get scared and carry the fear or you can digest the moment and move on with a life of faith and offering.

Another time, it was a beautiful evening at dusk and I was standing on our balcony holding my 2 1/2-year-old son in my arms. Suddenly the sound of the banging of pots and pans echoed everywhere as neighboring apartment buildings erupted in a great clanging noise. This was a frequent expression of protest by the Chilean people against their government. Out of nowhere gunfire erupted and you could see the flash of light as the bullets pierced the night sky. My son’s eyes widened and he pointed at the flashing lights and shouted: “boom, boom, boom”. We quickly retreated inside our center with my thoughts and prayers directed toward something bigger than myself.

Eventually the government installed a “toque de queda” or Marshall law. A dusk to dawn curfew was enforced and anyone out after dark could be shot. My wife was in the 8th month of her pregnancy at the time and I asked her: “please don’t go into labor during the night time or there may be some trouble”. Just as I had feared she went into

labor at about 9 PM when the curfew was in effect. Fortunately, the government had created a “Hotline” to call for such emergencies and an army truck was dispatched to bring my wife and I to the hospital. I had such an eerie feeling as we drove through the streets of a deserted Santiago. The city was completely quiet and dark with no signs of life. It was at times like these that I realized that our lives were not our own but belong to Heavenly Parent. We were received warmly at the hospital and, early the next morning, our third child, Christopher, was born. That morning I sat alone in the waiting room waiting for my wife and newborn son, reflecting on what we had been through. How grateful I felt for how abundant our lives had become.

I traveled frequently while on mission in Chile. I attended the Confederation of the Associations for the Unification of the Societies of the Americas (CAUSA) conferences in both Brazil and Uruguay as well as visiting our church family in Paraguay. My travels were not only limited to South America, but expanded to the USA and Korea. In November 1983, I was invited to attend an ICUS conference in Chicago together with some academics from Chile. Before returning to Chile, while in New York, I was informed that there would be a major speaking tour throughout Korea with True Father giving speeches on VOC in major cities around the country. I was to return to Chile in order to invite a professor to join together in this historic speaking tour. In mid-December, missionary brothers and sisters together with their academic guests arrived in Seoul to commence this providential event which probably none of us truly understood. We boarded buses and traveled many hours each day to the various rally venues sleeping in different hotels each night. At each rally we would go onto the stage and sit behind our True Parents representing the many nations of the world. Many thousands attended each event and I was in awe watching True Father inspire his nation before God and the entire world. It was only later that I understood how dangerous these rallies were for True Parents and their family. It was during the rally in Taegu where we stood on the stage with True Parents, that the beautiful true son, Heung Jin Nim, was

involved in an accident and became a sacrifice. I realized just how serious the times in which we were living were and that our lives had to be offered unconditionally for the Heavenly Will.

Our church activities in Chile were the traditional outreach efforts of witnessing, education and Sunday service. I was able to arrange a meeting with a Catholic bishop in Santiago and shared with him about our True Parents and our faith. I left him a copy of the Divine Principle with the hope that he would study and learn our teachings. Later I was so disappointed to hear that he had written an article in the local newspaper critical of the teachings of our church. He said that Unificationists believed that Jesus Christ failed his mission which is not our teaching at all. In fact, we teach that Jesus was victorious and brought salvation on the spiritual level although not all that he set out to accomplish was fulfilled. Unfortunately, the bishop gave a distorted impression of our teachings which saddened me deeply. I reflected on what our True Father must have been up against in Korea during the earlier days of our church enduring misunderstandings, distortions, and accusations of every kind. Such was the path that Jesus had to experience as well.



Sunday service in Santiago, Chile



Chilean church congregation

Over the years I worked together with many dozens of my fellow missionaries, most of whom went out to the world in 1975 like myself. I felt a natural bond with them and always a sense of solidarity. Of course, at times different personalities can scrape against each other, but my own recollections are of the many friendships that I made. I always found myself in the leadership position as the years passed by and I was humbled before God and man for that. With my fellow missionaries, I felt that we were only just brothers and sisters working together. I respected them deeply and I can say that they set me straight more than once.

In the four countries of the Southern Cone of South America I worked together with three Japanese missionaries, two American missionaries and one German missionary. Mostly, these were couples with children just like my own family, dealing with the normal trials of raising their families. We were all so much alike in our faith in spite of our differences in nationality. How important it is to know what we have and when we have it. Many times, blessings are bestowed and we overlook what we have been given. In hindsight I realize how precious the gifts of life that were given me and how gratitude must be ever present in my heart. My missionary brothers and sisters will always remain with me in my thoughts and prayers.

After two short years in Chile, my mission was once again suddenly changed. This saddened me because I felt as if I hadn't made a sufficient offering or result in my efforts. I confess that, out of all my mission countries, Chile was the most challenging for me and I repent that I couldn't leave behind a better foundation for the future mission. I sensed that I was indebted to this country, feeling that Chile had given to me more than what I was able to give to Chile. My limited heart could expand during this time and I was grateful for the hardships, trials, and indemnity that I encountered.

A Return to the Northern Hemisphere

On February 2, 1985, my family arrived in Bogota, Colombia to begin our new mission. All of my previous missions up until that point had been in the Southern Hemisphere but now a return north would usher in another new beginning. I was to become the new regional director for the Northern region of South America. This region was comprised of the 5 nations of Colombia, Venezuela, Ecuador, Peru and Bolivia. One major difference in this new mission was that I would no longer be the national leader of Colombia but would focus exclusively on the oversight and development of the region. I welcomed this new arrangement and felt, in many ways, liberated to concentrate on the larger affairs of the 5 countries I was now responsible for. The national leadership of Colombia remained in the hands of a wonderful Japanese couple, Mr. and Mrs. Nakai. They were very capable leaders and were much loved and respected by their membership of about 30 dedicated brothers and sisters. I still remember well how warmly we were received by our loving Colombian church.

I wasn't aware of just how much danger we were to encounter in Colombia. Upon arrival I heard that the drug cartels threatened to kill 10 Americans for every Colombian extradited to the US for drug crimes. I confess that at that time I had to face the trials of my fears. It wasn't the first time that I had dealt with dangers and all I could do was to kneel in prayer and ask for Heaven's guidance and protection. During our 5½ years in Colombia the drug cartels instilled fear throughout the country, killing 1000's of police, politicians, judges, and innocent people. I was grateful that our church was protected by God during those years and that our precious brothers and sisters remained faithful and full of hope.

One other major danger in Colombia at that time was the civil unrest caused by militant Marxist groups. The Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) was the largest liberation army in South America, numbering over 25,000 armed fighters. There

were countless armed attacks and bombings carried out around the country, instilling fear in the population. Although most of the violence took place in the countryside, there would be occasional bombings and armed conflict that we could hear around us in Bogota. One morning I was walking in downtown Bogota and I found myself in the middle of a gun battle between the police and some bad guys. Bullets were ricocheting off the traffic signs just above my head as I quickly threw myself to the ground and crawled on my hands and knees away from the conflict. In spite of this, I sometimes felt more safe and secure in Colombia than I did in the USA, as I had been attacked and robbed on three different occasions in my earlier life in America. I was well aware that many other of our missionaries had risked their lives in dangerous war-torn countries throughout the world, and some had even died. My attitude was that my life was not my own and that I was living for a purpose bigger than myself.

I was able to obtain a visa for myself and my family as a representative of the International Relief Friendship Foundation (IRFF). How wonderful it was not to have the stress of immigration problems like I experienced in some of my earlier mission countries. Although I wasn't actually able to do any concrete relief projects in Colombia, I felt grateful to at least be able to offer spiritual education, guidance, and prayers for the people. The foundation of IRFF allowed me to be free to pursue my mission of expanding our church throughout Northern South America and this provided me with the feeling of stability.

The foundation of our church was much larger in Colombia than it had been in Chile. There were a few small church centers around the country and two small restaurants which provided a bit of economic foundation for our mission. The membership inspired me with their faith as they would go out every day witnessing and fundraising. Our members were not only Colombians but also brothers and sisters from Peru, Nicaragua, Spain, and America. The day to day running of our Colombian church continued smoothly in the hands of Mr. Nakai and I was sensitive not to create any

unnecessary changes in the flow of activities. I think that this was a transitional time for both Mr. Nakai and myself as he now had a central figure directly above him and I no longer directed the church in front of me. From the beginning I found it so easy to respect and work together with my new Japanese missionary brother. Our unity seemed to come naturally which was very important for the members to see. Also, our two young families could grow close together in friendship and missionary solidarity. Both of our families had three children and, for the first time I could see my children laugh and play together with their new second generation friends.

Almost immediately upon my arrival in Colombia I prepared a trip to familiarize myself with the various missions in my new region. I found myself traveling much more than in any of my previous missions. I was on the road 5-6 months a year not only taking care of my region but attending international training sessions, leadership meetings, holiday celebrations, and conferences such as ICUS, the Professors World Peace Academy (PWPA), and the Assembly of the World's Religions. Still my main travel was to Venezuela, Ecuador, Peru, and Bolivia. I found my new region snuggled in the high altitudes of the Andean Mountain range. La Paz, Bolivia was over 2 miles above sea level and the air was so thin that I would sometimes struggle to catch my breath. I found that by walking just 100-200 meters I would be out of breath and breathing hard. With time the physical body does adjust to the new environment and the altitude is not such a problem.

Peru was the second most developed mission in our region with three church centers and many wonderful brothers and sisters. They had established a small primary school (The Prince of Peace) in Lima and a daycare business in the highland city of Puno. The missionary leaders were a British/American couple, Victor and Carmela Lim. I had known Carmela from the time I had first joined our church in San Francisco 15 years earlier. Like Colombia, Peru was experiencing civil unrest and violent attacks were being carried out by the Marxist insurgent group, Sendero Luminoso (Shining

Light Path). I recall one flight arriving at the airport in Lima for a visit during a toque de queda (Marshall law). The missionaries had to meet me with a special pre-arranged vehicle to drive through the deserted streets of the capital city. Several times we were stopped at check points by heavily armed military and asked to exit the car to be frisked. Needless to say, it was an unsettling and tense experience. Such was the environment in Latin America in those years and all of us missionaries had to confront our fears and adapt to these circumstances of our ever-changing unstable world.



Three couples as missionaries to Colombia



Northern South America missionaries in 1985

The other three countries in my region had a more limited church foundation with only a few members. Mr. and Mrs. Mine in Ecuador, Mr. and Mrs. Iwasawa in Bolivia, and Mr. and Mrs. Mitsubishi in Venezuela had sacrificed years in their countries and their reports and testimonies inspired me greatly. There were other additional missionaries in our region including Japanese couples in Colombia and Peru and a German/American couple in Ecuador. Only God knows their stories of the years of tears and efforts invested for the sake of their nations. Often, I had to represent these nations before True Parents at leadership meetings and I always tried to share the sacrificial heart of these precious pioneers. Small businesses were established in each of these three countries to give financial stability to the missions. A health food shop in Venezuela, a restaurant in

Ecuador, and the sale of calculo (eastern medicine) in Bolivia were humble but vital activities in these early missions.

I returned to Colombia after concluding my first regional visits and decided to organize a 40-day training session for the brothers and sisters of the 5 countries. Most of these members had never had more than a 2-day or 7-day workshop and I felt that more intensive education and training was the next step in the development of our church missions. It is not so easy to organize such an international event and much time is needed to find a suitable venue and to gather a staff. Also, each national leader needed ample time to prepare the financial means to send participants for the training. My own preparations of prayer and study was also an essential spiritual condition to insure a proper offering of our 40 days.

We finally convened our first regional 40-day training session in the summer of 1985 in Sangolqui, Ecuador, located just a few miles north of the Equator. About 50 brothers and sisters had traveled from our 5 countries to gather at a beautiful rural venue prepared by our Ecuadorian missionaries. Most of these members were quite new to our church and I felt a strong responsibility to solidify their life of faith. From the very first day I challenged them to take full advantage of the opportunity that God was giving to them. We then embarked on a six-week journey in search of God and True Parents through lectures, sermons, prayers, and fellowship.

Unlike the 40-day training I gave in Argentina two years earlier, I was this time able to teach in the Spanish language. Although I felt that my Spanish was inadequate, I strongly sensed the truth of the Principles being expressed eloquently by Heaven through my voice. Heavenly Parent was definitely taking notice and embracing South America through our humble gathering of searching children. A 40-day training is a separation from the old, through awakenings, rebirth, and discovering new life. For me, I always felt that the 40 days was like a mystical experience with the power of God directly guiding us. Even the words of truth that were spoken by my voice seem to come

from a source that wasn't mine. Sometimes after a lecture or sermon, I would sit down and pray and ask myself: "Where did that come from?" Once again, I had the feeling that I had received from the 40 days more than I had given. On the morning of the 41st day I went outside and saw in the distance that the majestic volcano, Cotopaxi, had become snow-capped during the night. At that moment I felt deep humility that perhaps Heaven had accepted our 40 days of offering and that now we could move forward in the South American providence.



Regional 40-day training in Ecuador in 1987. This took place roughly 20 miles from the equator.

During the 5½ years that I worked in Northern South America, I was able to offer three 40-day training sessions and two 21-day training sessions. Each of these gatherings were precious and unique, giving inspiration to the new ever-increasing membership of our region. Of my many activities and efforts in South America these training sessions

remain the closest to my heart. I realized in those years how much I loved to teach the Divine Principle and just how important education was in building the foundations of our movement. Teaching the Divine Principle is not a simple matter and is profoundly spiritual. The Divine Principle was given by Heavenly Parent after 1000's of years as a revelation to Rev. Sun Myung Moon and this new truth is very clearly at the center of the merit of the age in which we find ourselves.

During my time in Colombia, I was invited twice to the US in order to teach the Divine Principle at international 40-day training sessions. This was a very humbling experience for me because many of the participants were themselves missionary leaders and lecturers of the Divine Principle. In finding myself in a situation like that I could only pray that Heavenly Parent could use my voice and give a fresh and new expression of the word. I felt grateful for the trust that Heaven had placed in me and I returned to South America renewed and ready for the tasks ahead.

International travel began to demand much more of my time as the years passed by. The providence was ever advancing as more and more church sponsored events required my participation as a regional representative. I attended conferences and gatherings in New York, London, Geneva, Rome, Barcelona, Sao Paulo, and Seoul. One year I even traveled to Seoul on four separate occasions. I always remained conscious of the fact that I was only invited to attend these events as a representative of our precious regional church membership. Any blessings and love bestowed upon me had to be brought back and shared with my faithful brethren.

My own family continued to grow in Colombia as my wife gave birth to two daughters. Channa was born in 1986, and Jenneke in 1990 and great joy was given to both my family as well as to our church. I was proud that our family was so international and that it embraced so many parts of the world. We were an American father, a Dutch mother, and five children born in 3 different countries....2 New Zealanders, 1 Chilean, and 2 Colombians. We were by no means an ordinary family as viewed from the worldly

perspective. Although we had no money or possessions, I felt that we were wealthy beyond measure. The purpose, direction, and mission given to our young family by God was at the center of our reality. We were serving the world as a missionary family and that gave great meaning to our life of faith.

Our family lived in the garage of a two-story house that served as our church center. There was a small room connected to the garage where our five children slept and, although our dwelling place was humble, it was like the Kingdom of Heaven for us. Living so closely together as a young family is one of the most precious memories that remains with my wife and I over the years. Externally we may not have had very much, but I never felt pre-occupied or concerned over the wellbeing of my family. Our lives were simple and austere while at the same time abundant and filled with a deep sense of blessing. I am especially grateful to my wife during the periods I was traveling 5-6 months a year and she shouldered the major responsibility of raising our family.

Our many Unification Church missionaries sacrificed and suffered all over the world and some even died. When I was visiting Bolivia for the first time, our missionary, Mr. Iwasawa, asked me if I would like to visit the grave of their child. I was taken aback by this news and learned that this precious child of Bolivia lived only a few days. It deeply saddened me that this beautiful Japanese missionary couple had to make such a tearful offering. About 2-3 years later I received the devastating news that the Iwasawas had to bury a second child on Bolivian soil. This time the child only lived for a few hours, due to the inadequate medical knowledge of the midwife. At such times we can just cry and ask that we can comfort God's broken parental heart as well as the broken heart of the earthly parents. Healthcare in much of the developing world is not the healthcare you find in Japan, Germany, and the US. Fortunately, our brothers and sisters were mostly young and healthy and I myself turned 40 years old at that time with the blessing of good health.

In 1989 a young Colombian brother approached me and said he wanted to offer a confession. We went to the prayer room and he immediately began to cry as he admitted that he had been sent to our church by FARC as an infiltrator. Our movement had been teaching CAUSA lectures about the dangers of communism for several years and had caught the attention of FARC, a Marxist group. I was shocked and became deeply concerned with the potential dangers that this might pose to our church. This brother had been living in our church center for one year and had obviously been transformed by the love and truth of God and the Divine Principle. I was moved by his genuine tears and confession and offered it to Heavenly Parent. I must confess that I wrestled with many fears and worries in the coming weeks as FARC was an extremely violent and ruthless organization. I shared my thoughts and feelings with my wife and she gave me encouragement and strength. She said that we had been in Colombia as missionaries and that we should remain steadfast, resolute, and unwavering in spite of whatever dangers might arise. After all, other missionaries had faced similar dangers and some had even died. The only thing to be done was to pray for Heaven's protection and to move ever forward with faith and resolve to save the nation.

In late 1989 I was invited to attend a leadership conference in Sao Paulo, Brazil. It was here that I once again learned that my mission was to be changed and that I would be assigned to Mexico. I loved Colombia very much and I had been allowed to serve Northern South America for over 5 years, longer than any previous mission I had thus far experienced. I remembered that True Father had taught that change was good and that it was better not to get too comfortable in one place.

In my earlier life I had grown up in a military family and had rarely lived in one location for more than 2 years. By the time I was 12 years old I had attended 5 different schools and had lived in New York, Japan, Maryland, Alabama, and California. Perhaps this had been training for my future missionary years of traveling the world and adapting to an ever-changing array of cultures and environments. I was grateful for the trust that

our Heavenly Parent and True Parents placed in me by constantly pushing me in service to the whole world.

My Final Transition North

My family of seven flew from Bogota, Colombia, to Mexico City in July, 1990. We were greeted by the outgoing missionaries, Regis and Nancy Hanna, who would soon be departing to the USA. We were all awestruck to be brought to a church-owned house prepared by the Hannas in the town of Cuernavaca located one hour from Mexico City. Our new home was a large two story, four-bedroom house which seemed like a palace after living in a garage for five years. My children had only ever known quite humble surroundings and appeared overwhelmed by their wonderful new home. Although this would become our residence for the next three years, it would always fundamentally remain a public church property used for workshops and church gatherings.

Like most of my previous missions, I not only became the new national leader of Mexico, but the new regional director for Central America. My new region included the 7 countries of Mexico, Guatemala, Honduras, El Salvador, Costa Rica, Nicaragua, and Panama. It is a humble experience to be responsible for so many countries in God's Providence as Central America would now become the fourth region that Heavenly Parent entrusted me with. It would mean that I would have to stretch my time throughout the region and that traveling from one country to the next would remain central to my responsibilities. For the previous decade I had been traveling away from my own mission country and my family for 5-6 months a year and this would continue in my service to the Central American region. In hindsight, I realize that my wife truly raised our 5 children almost on her own through the many years of my comings and goings. I

am so grateful for the many untold sacrifices she endured during those unforgettable years of missionary life.

Our mission foundation was relatively strong in Mexico with active church centers in the five cities of Mexico City, Guadalajara, Monterey, Ciudad Juarez, and Queretaro. The brothers and sisters were faithful and dedicated and were working sacrificially in both witnessing and fundraising. In order to introduce my family to the membership, I convened a national gathering and invited all the brothers and sisters to Cuernavaca for a few days of fellowship. New leadership meant a new beginning and a fresh start. I provided a series of lectures, sermons, and guidance as we prayed together for our nation of Mexico. I promised the members that I would soon visit each of their church centers and, within a few weeks, I embarked on a bus trip in order to see for myself the state and reality of our national mission. Most of our church centers were small and humble pioneer churches facing difficulties and growing pains. Nevertheless, the deepest impression that struck me was the devotional hearts of these young faithful members and I returned from this trip to Cuernavaca both inspired and encouraged.

After a few weeks of focus on Mexico I planned a regional visit to each of the countries in my new region in order to meet the missionaries and membership as well as to understand the heart and spirit of Central America. Not all Latin American countries are the same just because they speak the same language and share a similar heritage. Each country had a very distinct and unique culture and personality which I had to see and feel for myself. Most of our missions were small and humble, but I could see the wonderful foundations already established for growth in the years to come.

Our Unification Church missionaries always inspired me because they had already persevered for 15 years and were still filled with a passionate faith to build the Kingdom of Heaven on earth. Their great faith inspired and pushed me to forge ahead in my own life of devotion. I returned to Mexico and began to make plans for regional education and development.



Leading a gathering of brothers and sister in Cuernavaca, Mexico

Once again, as in previous regions, I began preparations for a regional 40-day training session to be held in Cuernavaca, Mexico. Months of planning were needed to convene such an event, as each nation had to prepare the participants and finances in order to support such an activity. My own spiritual preparation of prayer and study was also absolutely necessary in order to mobilize the support of the heavenly spirit world. Each of the 40-day training sessions that I organized included 3 cycles of the Divine Principle. One cycle I would teach myself, a second taught by an experienced visiting lecturer, and a third by the trainees themselves in practice teaching sessions. Blessing education was also a major focus of the training with one week of lectures, internal guidance, and testimonies offered. This education proved timely as many of our Central

American brothers and sisters traveled to Korea to receive the blessing during my time in the region.

I think that the emphasis I placed on education was rooted in my own experiences in our movement. True Father constantly taught us in the early days of our church, giving speeches that would last for many hours. I myself participated in three 120-day training sessions which totaled one full year of intense educational activities. Even now in the spirit world we hear of 40-day workshops where Heung Jin Nim and many heavenly saints teach the Divine Principle. I was so thankful that 40-50 brothers and sisters eventually were able to travel to Mexico and participate in the Cuernavaca 40-day training.

Eventually I would offer two more 40-day training sessions in the Central American region. In 1991 we gathered in the countryside of Nicaragua for our 2nd 40-day. The communist Sandanista government of Daniel Ortega was still in power which made the political climate a bit tense. Nevertheless, we gathered at a training center that had been built from the ground up by the missionaries, Michael and Marianne Irwin. This beautiful rural venue was the perfect environment for our training session studies and activities. It felt good to proclaim God's truth in a revolutionary communist nation and I hoped that our 40-day condition of prayer and study could translate into some heavenly benefit for the Nicaraguan people. Of course, the success of any training program is determined by the transformation of the lives of the trainees. Only time and history will show if hearts and minds were resurrected and filial sons and daughters of Heavenly Parent emerged.

In 1992 our third regional 40-day training session was held in Guatemala. Once again, our church had built a wonderful two-story training center that was just perfect for our 40 days. The site was beautifully located on the shores of Lake Atitlan surrounded by majestic volcanic-shaped mountains. This fresh rural setting exhibiting so much beauty of creation truly inspired the presence of God in our humble gathering of

brothers and sisters. It was so easy to pray and teach in such surroundings. Our training session concluded enthusiastically and it was offered to God and True Parents on the altar of the Central American Providence.

I recall in Mexico that there was little time to get settled. If I wasn't visiting our church centers in Mexico by bus, I would be flying throughout our region visiting our mission countries. I was surprised when World Mission Headquarters in New York informed me that I was to become the "acting" regional director for the neighboring Caribbean region which included an additional 7-8 mission countries. This meant, that for the first time, I would be responsible for not just one region but for two. It was all a bit overwhelming and I tried my best to organize and schedule my time for the ever-increasing providential needs. I felt both humbled and grateful that Heaven was entrusting me with more and more responsibility. Unfortunately, I never was able to actually visit the Caribbean region mostly due to time and money limitations. How precious those years were to spend time with brothers and sisters in so many cities and countries.

Beyond my regional travels I would also be invited regularly to an array of meetings and conferences throughout the world. I had only been in Mexico for a few weeks when I traveled to San Francisco to attend "The Assembly of the World's Religions" representing the Unification church of Central America. In 1992 I was invited to attend "The God Conference" held in San Diego, California. I traveled to Korea with a large group of our Central American brothers and sisters to participate in a large international Blessing ceremony. I would also regularly attend church leadership meetings held throughout the world (Korea, New York, and Brazil) to give reports as well as receive instructions from True Father or church elders. As always, I had to remind myself as I participated in these many international activities, that I was representing brothers and sisters, countries, and regions. The sweat and tears of our membership always had to be at the forefront of my reports and any divine inspirations

or directions given by True Father had to be shared with brothers and sisters as soon as I returned home. I always prayed that I could be a pure unobstructed conduit going in both directions, both up to Abel and down to Cain. This, at least, was the standard that I strove to embody, even though I probably fell incredibly short.

In October, 1992, I was invited to Kodiak, Alaska, with other missionaries and leaders to meet with Rev. Moon. It was such a wonderful gathering that started each day with Hoon Dok Hwe and a lecture of the Divine Principle. We would then go out to the rivers or the ocean to fish for salmon and halibut. After dinner True Father would share his words and heart with us and embrace us with encouragement. True Mother was on a world speaking tour and would often call after an event to share her report with True Father. It was special to listen to our True Parent's converse with each other, sharing their hearts centered on the providential events of the day.

I remember that it was late Autumn and daylight savings time had given us an extra hour. True Father was sharing with us as usual when new directions came from Heaven. True Father informed us that all foreign missionaries would be reassigned to Russia in order to support the new emerging mission that was developing there. The Soviet Union had only recently broken apart and Russia was displaying great promise for church development. We were asked to go for at least 3 years and to arrive in Moscow by January 1, 1993. Of course, for my mission to be abruptly changed is always a shock but after so many previous transitions I had grown accustomed to starting anew.

I returned to Mexico knowing that I had a little over two months to make preparations for my departure to Russia. The ten years that I had spent in Latin America had gone by so quickly and my heart was a bit torn in having to leave a section of the world that had become a part of me. True Parents had sent out many Korean missionaries in 1992 and one of them, Rev. Eu, would be inheriting my mission in Mexico. I felt at ease that such capable new leadership would be given to our Mexican brothers and sisters.

One major difference in my new mission was that my family would not be going to Russia with me. Our church foundation was still limited in Russia and so my family would remain in Mexico for a yet-to-be determined period of time. The uncertainty and lack of clarity for the future of my family was offered up in prayer by my wife and I. Our children's education and the lack of a financial foundation worried me as I was to be gone for at least three years. Separation from my family was nothing new as I had traveled and worked apart from my wife and children for over a decade. Our offering to God had to be unconditional as obedience to our calling as missionaries had to remain pure and true. On December 30, 1992, I boarded an Aerofloat flight to Moscow with a heavy heart as well as an open and curious mind to what awaited me in Russia. The faces and spirits of the many Latin brothers and sisters I had taught and loved over the years flashed through my mind. One chapter in my missionary life was now concluding and little did I know that the next chapter would commence the unexpected winding down of my life as a missionary.



Three generations in Mexico



Missionary second generation

To Russia without excuse

I arrived in Moscow on December 31, 1992, just 3-4 hours before our 12:00 midnight pledge service to celebrate God's Day, 1993. I was greeted at a hotel by many friends and fellow missionaries. Although I was quite tired from my travels, I was informed that I was to lead the midnight pledge and prayer service observing our holy day. This God's Day pledge service was special because all of us present, in obedience to God, were beginning the new and enormous journey of the salvation of Russia. More than once, I had to take pause and wonder about this path that was awaiting me.

I had come from the pleasant springlike weather of Mexico to the middle of the harsh winter climate of northern Europe. The sun would go down early and it would be dark by midafternoon. I was definitely affected by these changes and realized that I would have to adapt to so many new realities that I was facing. Although I had never really considered myself as a spiritually sensitive person, it was then that I began to feel the heaviness of the Russian spirit world. I began to feel ill at ease, isolated, and uncomfortable in this vast new country.

We missionaries arrived in Russia simultaneously with the scheduling of many seminars held around the country for teachers and educators. Lectures were to be given of a new curriculum that was to be introduced to Russian students throughout the country. Missionaries were divided up and assigned to the various seminars to support these teachers. I was assigned to an event held in Moscow where 150 or so participants gathered to study many of the central principles taught by our church.

The venue was an elegant and plush assembly hall used for high level political and social events in Moscow. I found it unusual that we had to enter this beautiful facility, not through the front doors, but through a series of long dark tunnels under the building. Just to go to my room to sleep at night I had to walk down a 150-meter dark tunnel and I was asked to be discreet and not let anyone see me go into my room. It felt

like we were not supposed to be in that facility and I felt very ill at ease the entire week of the seminar.

In spite of my own challenges the seminar itself went very well and the teachers and educators were inspired by the lecture content and the overall fellowship of the event. I was moved when, at the end of the seminar, several of the participants approached me and gave me a few simple small gifts from the region of Russia where they came from.

I was unable to sleep for the entire first week in Russia as I tossed and turned each night beginning each day exhausted with little energy. It was difficult to concentrate on the day's schedule and my ability to focus on the seminar just wasn't there. I became more and more preoccupied and even a bit fearful as to what I was experiencing. It is not good to be self-centered and to just think of one self as I felt isolated and alone. I reflected on True Father in the early days on how he must have felt alone in all the world with his heavy burdens. As I prayed, I determined that I would carry on as I had always done in my many past missions. True Parents sent me to Russia to serve and that was what I intended to do.

After about two weeks in Russia a meeting was held where we missionaries were to be assigned as pioneers to various cities and towns throughout Russia. I felt some sense of peace in my heart to go to any small town in this vast country as a pioneer and to make my offering. As missionaries were one-by-one given their assignments, I awaited my turn. Suddenly my name was called and I was completely shocked and overwhelmed by the decision that I would become responsible for our church in Moscow. I was informed that the Moscow membership of our church was comprised of many hundreds of members.

As the meeting concluded I found myself surrounded by several sub-leaders and Itinerary Workers (IW) who asked for decisions to be made and funds to be provided for their missions. I had only been assigned to Moscow minutes earlier with no familiarity

with the mission and felt a bit blind-sided. I told those who were asking for decisions (I didn't even know their names) to wait until I could understand and evaluate my new responsibilities. I'm sure that these were wonderful brothers and sisters, but they seemed a bit frustrated and unhappy with my response. I felt shell-shocked, isolated, and alone.

For the next 1-2 days I struggled as I had never struggled before and fought many internal battles. I was still unable to sleep and felt exhausted both physically and spiritually. What worried me the most was how I would be able to lead and embrace a congregation of hundreds of members while I was going through my own inner turmoil. I became more centered on myself and my circumstances at the expense of seeing from God's point of view. In short, I lost my vertical center and my missionary identity. Many tears were shed as I desperately fought to go forward in Russia. In the end I concluded that I needed a period of time away from public service in order to recapture that what was missing in me. I cried as I reported with repentance this decision to Heavenly Parent. I felt unworthy, inadequate, and at the bottom point of my life.

Without too much detail, I made the painful decision to depart from Russia, return to Mexico to collect my family, and to move back to the US after almost 18 years as a missionary. I tearfully reported to our Russian church leadership, Dr. Seuk and Jack Corley, explaining that I was spiritually exhausted and needed time to recover the lost fervor that such a mission in Russia would require. They agreed that I should return to the USA with the understanding that I might consider returning to a mission in Russia at a later time. Unfortunately, that never came to pass.

I was without excuse before Heavenly Parent and True Parents upon my sudden departure from Russia. What can you say to the sorrowful God of 6000 years regarding fallen man's constant unkept promises and failed responsibilities? I had no reason, justification, or excuse to Heaven for my weaknesses and limitations. I felt guilt, shame, and repentance for my struggles and part of me died the day I left my mission country of Russia. Such were the tests, trials, and tribulations that I encountered on my path.

Fortunately for all of us, our Heavenly Creator is a parent of love and forgiveness! First, one has to die before being reborn and given new life. I count those difficult weeks in Russia as abundant blessings bestowed upon me by my Heavenly Parent. They were blessings unseen at the moment but, with time, I became aware of how precious that period in my life was. If our attitude is vertical and true, then on the foundation of suffering, there can always emerge new life and growth. And, so, I count my blessings! My 18 years of missionary life is my treasure. It will always stay with me and remain a central part of my earthly offering to Heavenly God and my True Parents. I feel that I have been blessed beyond measure and will forever be grateful to have been granted the chance to serve as a missionary in the “last days”.

Christopher Paul Olson

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