
Bringing God's Highest Truth to a Land Governed by Fear – Part 4

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*Celebration with witnessing contacts and new members
By William Connery*

In February 1975, American member William Connery was selected as one of a large group of new missionaries that would pioneer many of the world's nations. Each nation received one missionary from Japan, one from the United States, and one from Germany. William accepted a posting to the East African country of Uganda. At that time, Uganda was governed by President Idi Amin, one of the twentieth century's cruelest dictators. William's story, told here in his own words, affords us insight into the faith, resilience and love — under adversity — of those who pioneered new lands to bring God's healing truth and love. (Earlier installments can be accessed through clicking on "Early Members Tell Their Stories" at the top of the home page.)

On November 3 (Children's Day), Ulf and I went to Jinja, 40 miles east of Kampala. Jinja is the second largest city in Uganda; it is also the industrial center and home of the Owens Falls Dam,

which is the main producer of hydroelectric power in Uganda. But Jinja is most importantly the Source of the Nile River; the actual place where that River begins from Lake Victoria and starts on its 4,000 mile journey through Uganda, Sudan and Egypt. Unlike many rivers, which start from small creeks or from the run-offs of mountain snows, the Nile is a full-fledged river from its very beginning. We also visited the spot across from which John Speke had been the first white man to see the Source in the mid-1800s.

Our school was co-ed, with students usually between 13 and 18 years old. The students were there for various reasons: some had too-low scores to enter government schools; some were the children of the 'nouveau riche' parents (*mafuta mingi* in Swahili) who either wanted their children to get the education they never received or to get the kids out of the house; and some people were actually interested in education! Space was another problem; my smallest class had 40 pupils – one of my classes had 80! And of course discipline was a problem – growing up in the ruthless environment of Amin's regime had hardened some of them and I was forced to discipline a few students. But I do have to admit that the majority of my students were attentive and responsible young men and women.

November 8, 1975 was a day of trial and testing for both Ulf and myself. Oscar, the high school boy whom I had met on my first day in Kampala, came to pay me a visit. He had visited me intermittently since May 15, but he was always requesting money from me, even though I always focused our meetings on the study of Divine Principle and the Bible. He showed his true colors on this day, threatening to turn both Ulf and myself over to the police unless he was given a bribe. I pleaded with him and reminded him that any turn against us would involve himself. I finally gave him \$15 and he promised never to see us again – and actually I never did see him after that day. Later that day, Gaquandi, a young man from Zaire whom Ulf had met, also came. He began talking all kinds of nonsense and seemed either mentally unbalanced or spiritually possessed. When he refused to leave, Ulf called the police. When the police came, Gaquandi told them how he was involved with us in a gold-smuggling scheme. We told the police his situation and said they could search our apartment if they liked. Somehow they trusted us and took Gaquandi away. Ulf and I were thankful and grateful that we could keep our positions in the nation: also we were angry to see how Satan used people, especially in relation to money.

Ulf submitted his papers for a work permit on November 18. He had tried, based on his engineering skills, to get a job at various places, including a car-repair agency, the university, and even UNESCO. He finally found a position at a firm of consulting engineers right across the street from the West German Embassy. His office was in the same building with the South Korean Embassy. Ulf established a good friendship with both embassies. December 1 was Ulf's first full day at his job.

On December 8 I received a ration card from Fresh Foods, Ltd. As I have mentioned, it was very difficult to get what we consider the bare essentials of life (salt, sugar, soap, cooking oil). Ulf and I had been sharing some of the commodities that Abdul could get with his card. And every once in a while we got lucky and happened to be at a shop when sugar or baking flour would be distributed. But you had to be quick – once put on sale, most essential commodities would be sold out in an hour or less.

Ulf returned to the Immigration Board on December 15 and discovered that his application for a work permit had been turned down. He brought his case to the West German Ambassador: he met with the Minister of Internal Affairs on December 22. The next day found Ulf overjoyed: he had received a work permit good for two years.



William with Ugandan members

Finally on March 15 I moved into a small apartment just a block from the school. Shortly afterwards Ulf also moved into an apartment near the open-air market. On March 28 Ulf borrowed his boss's VW bug and seven of us piled in. First we drove east to Jinja and established a Holy Ground near the source of the Nile. Then we went through Kampala and south to Entebbe, where we established a Holy Ground near Entebbe Airport. March 31 we celebrated the first church holiday at our own place (my apartment). We established a tradition which we generally followed in the future: food preparation in the morning (after 7:00 Pledge Service); a feast about noon; games, singing or testimonies in the afternoon; and going to a movie in the evening.

On April 4 I attended the Gospel Church; I had already visited there a number of times, had sung some songs and given testimony. Now they asked me to give a sermon on April 25. The next day my new neighbor, Mr. Y., promised to make blackboards for me (he was in charge of a large bookstore in Kampala). A few days later our new member John-Patrick moved into the apartment with me: about the same time Michael moved in with Ulf.

On April 23 a visitor came from New York City. He was Mr. Song, one of Father's earliest disciples – he had joined when he was 12 and had been a member for 25 years. His visit was a real revival and a breath of fresh air. I met him near my apartment and walked him over to see Ulf; on the way he bought many fruits and vegetables. John-Patrick and I had just finished a three-day fast while Ulf, Hideaki and Michael were starting one. Mr. Song told us to forget about fasting: we needed to eat so that we could work harder. He said that we should not be separated: since Ulf

had the largest apartment, Mr. Song said we should all stay together there. So I quickly moved out of my place and Hideaki made plans to move away from the lecturer he had been staying with at the University. Mr. Song told us about the situations in other African missions – some nations he had been unable to enter and others he had only stayed three hours or one day. He could stay with us almost five days. During that time, I gave my sermon at the Gospel Church. He also bought us much food and took us to the movies several times. We felt revived, refreshed and renewed by the time he left.



Archbishop Janani Luwum with Idi Amin

On May 4th I attended my first meeting of the Kampala Businessmen's Lunch Meeting at the Speke Hotel: Archbishop Janani Luwum was the guest speaker; his topic focused on a recent Anglican Conference held in Trinidad. I had been introduced to this group by Mr. K., a former seminarian whom I had first met in January and had met many times since, speaking about religion and other topics. He had studied in England and was now an asst. manager in an insurance firm. Thus began one of my most fruitful contacts in Uganda — I attended that Tuesday meeting from then on, meeting many of the Christian leaders of Uganda; eventually Ulf, Hideaki and I could speak there several times over the next two years. Also what was left of the British community usually attended the Tuesday luncheons; through this I started attending Bible Study at one of the homes of an expatriate.

On June 11 we heard about an assassination attempt on Idi Amin. (He had been attending a police review. He left early, driving away with his own driver in the passengers' seat. Two grenades were thrown at his vehicle, exploding next to it and behind it. One seriously wounded his driver, who died two days later. Amin had amazing luck – or premonition – at this and other times – if he had been where he was meant to be he would be dead.) The next day we began going through our belongings to see if there was anything that could be used against us if we were arrested again. On June 26 Amin had himself declared "Life President" (or as one friend of ours said "president until he dies").

An event of international proportions began on June 28. An Air France jet had been hijacked from Lebanon and flown to Entebbe Airport. Idi Amin immediately stepped in as a "neutral negotiator" – although everyone knew of Amin's hatred of the Jews and his support for the Palestinian guerillas – the hijackers had Palestinian connections while eighty passengers were Israelis. On

July 4 we heard of the daring Israeli Raid on Entebbe – although-people had to publicly condemn the raid, most of our friends admired the courage and forcefulness shown by the Israelis and how President Amin had been made to look like a fool. July 6 and 7 were public holidays to mourn for the twenty-three Ugandans and seven hijackers killed in the raid. On July 22 I was stopped about two blocks from school by two secret police. They asked what I was doing and what was in my bag. I said I was a teacher and my bag contained books. They had a look and let me be. Hideaki began classes at the University on July 1. He had been able to overcome the language problems and been able to stay in Uganda on his wits and the grace of God. Because of his experience as a center leader in Japan, he was the unofficial central figure, even though my own thoughts were that the three of us were equals and each one had something important to contribute. (Someone had asked Rev. Moon during training “I’d like to know if there are special roles for Germans, Japanese and Americans. For example, Cain-Abel, Adam & Eve, etc.?” He replied: “Father does not think that way. The application of the Cain-Abel relationship is often misused or misinterpreted. There is no Cain and Abel. ‘You are three brothers and sisters. Natural leaders periodically emerge, of course. Then you pray centering on Father, and everything is going to be okay.’”)

On August 24 John-Patrick returned from Nairobi where he had been working since the beginning of May. Many pages could be written about the people Ulf, Hideaki and I met over the three or more years we spent in Uganda. Some were seekers after God and moved into our center for various periods of time. Some just saw us as rich white men (for many people white meant rich). After being “burned” a few times during our first months, we established a strict policy of no financial or physical hand-outs. We often had to make difficult decisions and constantly prayed that God would guide us in the proper care of our new members.

Letters were always an important part of our lives. Especially we were trying to keep abreast of the Yankee Stadium rally in June 1976 and the Washington Monument rally of September 18, 1976, which was the second anniversary of Rev. Moon’s first major breakthrough at Madison Square Garden. Finally on September 28 we received word (from Japan) that W.M. had been a great success. It was also during this time that Rev. Moon’s picture appeared on the cover of the international Newsweek magazine. Somehow we received five copies through the mail; it broke our hearts but we had to destroy them by fire in order to keep our cover.

Our relationship with the foreign community was strange and interesting. This was due to our own position and most of the foreigners in Uganda were strange and interesting. I don’t mean this in a bad sense. Especially if you were British or American you had to be dedicated to stay. But everyone had to walk a tightrope (we knew of one West German who came to teach in a local college — he took pictures all over the place – got picked up and beaten by the Secret Police and left Uganda within a week.) I usually met foreigners when I went shopping; this included Russians, Red Chinese and North Koreans. Yet I am glad that God had given Ulf, Hideaki and I enough common sense to pick our friends carefully and keep our mission foremost in our mind.

One of our friends -was a teacher at a local grammar school. On Nov. 24 I could speak to his 7th grade class on the Purpose of Life and the Process of Creation. The children were very responsive and I was hoping that this would lead to a new avenue in our work. But my friend visited me five days later and said I couldn’t speak there again – he had probably gotten some bad reactions, either from other members of his faculty or possibly from the Secret Police. At least on December 12 I was able to speak again at the Gospel Church.



Nakasero Hill in Kampala, the location of William's school

My first full year of school ended November 30. December I spent studying, teaching the Divine Principle to our friends and attending the Tuesday Luncheons. We could attend a Christmas party at one of the British homes (complete with a little fake snow, made out of cotton) and had a Christmas party for our friends on December 25. On January 1 we celebrated God's Day. I started teaching again on the 10th. Ulf also could take his first "vacation" (Dec. 31 – Jan. 16). John-Patrick suddenly returned on February 8. He had gotten a job as a steward on East African Airlines. But the Airlines was now defunct due to the breakdown in relations between Uganda, Kenya and Tanzania.

Another major crisis arose on February 14 the following year (1977). It was announced on the radio that Archbishop Janani Luwum had been implicated in a plot to overthrow the government. Archbishop Luwum and two cabinet ministers had been arrested. The next day Hideaki told me the news about the "car accident" in which all three men had been killed, even though their driver had been only slightly injured.

The truth was reported in Christianity Today (March 18, 1977) :

Amin ordered all three shot and the two government officials were promptly killed. When the president learned that his troops were reluctant to shoot the archbishop he is reported to have shot Luwum himself. Soldiers were also reported to have been reluctant to follow Amin's order to run trucks over the bodies of the three; they finally agreed to crush the corpses of the cabinet ministers but not the archbishop's.

We all felt deep sorrow at the loss of our brother and dear friend Archbishop Luwum, a modern Uganda Martyr.



Modern Kampala