

South American Success Stories as Examples of Missionary Strategy

Dong Woo Kim
August 12, 2015



Dong Woo Kim at the São Paulo church, Brazil

From August 6 to 12, I visited three countries in South America: Brazil, Bolivia and Argentina to promote Universal Peace Academy (UPA) and to speak to candidates for the 2016 class. I met Rev. Shin Dong Mo, the regional president of South America, and went over my schedule with him after arriving at the Sao Paulo church in Brazil. I had many expectations and deep curiosity, as it was my first time touring South America. Recently I had been hearing a lot about the home group activities, which have been active across South America, from Rev. Shin and other leaders. So I wanted to go out to the field and experience them personally; I saw my stay as an opportunity to observe what elements led that movement to success.



Dr. Kim at the church in Santa Cruz, Bolivia

Winning over Brazilian parents

The morning after I arrived, I attended Hoon Dok Hae at the main church. Two hundred young people filled the chapel, singing hymns in Korean and following along with the service in Korean, in perfect order. I was strongly moved as I observed so many young people reading the Hoon Dok Hae material with bright eyes and praying with tears early in the morning. The tradition of following a public path and a church life began with only a few second-generation members, but it has not only become generalized, it is booming in growth as they create a culture with other young new members.

I heard that in the beginning, when a small number of second-generation Unificationists started out on their public path of faith, suspicion and opposition arose from their parents.

However, now parents voluntarily have their children participate in church programs to train their faith. Parents are even taking the lead to guide young people to take the path of a vertical tradition. Moreover, I feel respect for the Brazil leaders when I think about how much effort and devotion they made until they could create a model path through which the second-generation members could inherit and maintain a tradition of faith. As I saw how those in the second generation started to formally witness to university students by making elite witnessing teams on university campuses centered on a foundation of faith, I prayed for culture of heart movements to spread out across Brazilian universities.



Dr. Kim at the church in Argentina

Emulating Korean church methods

After I concluded my schedule of UPA applicant candidate interviews, I boarded a plane for Santa Cruz, Bolivia. Lee Jeong Moon, special envoy to the nation and the Santa Cruz church leader warmly welcomed me when I arrived and then we went to the church that the members had built themselves. After worship service the next day, I attended a cultural event that had been prepared for my visit.

In Bolivia's capitol, La Paz, the headquarters' director and his wife, UPA applicants, and young members from other churches gathered. As I watched performances introducing their home groups, mostly of song and dance, that they had rehearsed, I felt as if we were all brothers and sisters attending True Parents. As I watched the young people in traditional Bolivian clothing, doing their best to perform, I felt a tingling at that moment when everyone was one in a shared heart and culture though our language and customs are different.

To the Bolivian missionary, they said that vigorous witnessing at universities for a long period became a turning point. They were unable to recruit many people for the first few years, but to educate that small number with the Principle and tradition thoroughly, they applied the method used during the early days of the church in Korea and Japan. When they dispatched young members to do pioneer witnessing, they only gave them one-way transport fare and had them survive on their own in the field. Some places failed but after seeing their success rate, recruiting a hundred and twenty people in a year and a half, they have continued to hold fast to this tradition with conviction until now.

Currently there are twelve churches in the nation, and they are continuously sending out people on pioneer witnessing missions. After the new president took up his new post, he grafted home group movements onto this foundation and applied relationship witnessing and one-on-one Divine Principle education. With this result, the door opened for members to witness to their relatives and those around them with the Divine Principle. Currently, Bolivia has about four hundred members, and they are improving their organizational structure and rearming the members with the goal to reach a thousand members by next year. I felt at that church in Santa Cruz that just as in any developing community, the church is alive. The young member's spiritual standards are clear, they express abundant love and compassion and the absolute nature of their attitude toward the word and tradition made me feel as if I had gone back to the heart-based community I experienced at the church centers when I first joined the church.

The next day, I offered a sad farewell and I set off to Buenos Aires, Argentina. The director of the Argentina headquarters and the first and the second-generation members in the Argentina church focus education of the second-generation and witnessing. In South America, I observed that second-generation

members from other countries are living a life and faith, being educated and doing activities together. Seeing this, I felt that Brazil's church system is expanding and settling all across the South American continent. I was deeply inspired upon hearing that the oldest second-generation member in Argentina was witnessing at universities in Cordoba. As I saw that the elder second-generation members have become good examples of faith and stand at the head of a public path, I could confirm that there was great hope for many more second-generation Unificationists to go to key positions with responsibility for the future providence.

Activating tribal messiah activities

On my way back to Korea, after completing my schedule in Argentina, I made a brief stop in Sao Paulo and heard good news from Rev. Shin, the regional director. He said that the Sorocaba juvenile soccer team, which True Parents have invested in, is going to compete in Pyongyang's International Youth Football Competition. Even in the midst of busily preparing the team's visas and administrative management, he went to Paraguay to meet that nation's special envoy, Seo Seong Jong, to share the joy. I watched as they prepared to enter the Democratic Republic of Korea with a heart to practice love toward the North Korean people as True Parents have shown us, even if they have to pretend. I think that if all Unificationists in the world developed a regional project to express love toward North Koreans unconditionally, a shortcut to providential unification might emerge.

This seven-day visit was short, but I made effort to organize what I learned from my tour on the plane back to Korea. I believe that South America's current growth suggests that their missionary strategy could become a model for all other countries. By developing a home group movement and revitalizing the church, they have been able to raise members to develop a backbone composed of the Divine Principle and word as expressed through True Parents. I was able to confirm that on this foundation they are pioneering a method to spread the Divine Principle through one-on-one lectures, establishing a substantial witnessing foundation and vitalizing tribal messiah activities. In addition, when I see that the second-generation members growing at a tremendous pace, I see that there is a possibility to raise them into global leaders by giving them vision and hope for the world providence.