

I arrived in our mission country, Iceland March 1, 1996 - I knew it was guided

Paul Michael Herman

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In 1996, when we received Iceland as our mission country, I knew it was guided; my father had served as a radar operator here for most of the Second World War. Two years later, after building up traction, my wife and I, and our two (soon to be three) children made our move.

We arrived on March 1. On one hand, we received a cold reception. It was the coldest it had been on that date in eighty years. Otherwise, our reception was warm. One Icelandic church brother picked us up from the airport and drove us to his home, where we stayed with him and his family for the first few weeks. He and his wife slept in the living room and the four of us slept in their bedroom.

With this brother's help, I registered my business, we found a place to stay and settled into a small apartment across the street from our church in downtown Reykjavik. True Parents appeared to me in a vision at that time. They were sitting on two huge stone seats, carved out of a mountain, reigning over this ancestral land of the Vikings. Besides us and the national messiah couple from Germany and their children, several church families were living here.

In case you are curious, about Iceland's name -- yes, it deserves it. Of the six glaciers here, Vatnajökull, the largest one in Europe, covers about 8 percent of the country, but thanks to the Gulf Stream, the winters around the coastline, where most people live, are moderate -- summers are cool.

Icelanders, who had been under foreign rule for 682 years until 1944, had largely been living in material poverty until the 20th century. Perhaps having gone through hard times for so long made them more human and tight-knit. Today, Icelanders can be characterized as a strong, healthy, self-confident, creative men and women who while numbering only 332,000 are competitive and bent on being number one in the world. Also, they are upbeat, easy to talk to and barring family members, everyone calls one another by their first name.

The president is Ólafur. Also, in this informal environment, it is usually okay to drop in on someone without an appointment (perhaps not the president) -- a circumstance that makes breaking the ice, when it comes to witnessing, much easier. Also, as luck has it, almost everyone speaks English.

Since coming here, my focus has been on witnessing and other forms of outreach. In 1998, our members worldwide -- Icelanders included -- were out meeting people, giving simple explanations and then the blessing.

Later, our witnessing efforts took many forms. Using a book with the Peace Messages translated into Icelandic was one. (While most people do speak English, naturally, they are better in their native language.) In general, Icelanders are not very religious. Most belong to the Evangelical Lutheran Church; children go through their confirmation process. Otherwise, religious observances are largely relegated to baptisms, marriages, deaths and religious holidays.

In spite of this, through the years, guests have come to our services, lectures, seminars, UPF meetings and Divine Principle workshops. Some continue their friendship and affiliation, but on the grassroots level, concerning front line activists, our numbers haven't risen.

With the publication of *As a Peace-Loving Global Citizen*, the new excitement that stirred our movement reached our shores as well. A translation was done and we had the joy of sharing it.

Going door to door with the book, was good for being able to re-contact people. Because getting them to come to our meetings even after reading it, was a challenge, bringing Reverend Andy Compton's lecture series "Discovering the Divine Principle" to their homes, helped. As an inexperienced lecturer, reading through the script and making additional comments helped me feel comfortable. Still, it was hard to break through.

As it is most everywhere, average Icelanders want to see change. Perhaps they are a little further ahead with this than most other countries in doing something about their disappointment with certain high-profile representatives and corruption in venerable institutions. We've had our scandals among the church leadership; bankers have been imprisoned for crimes connected with the financial crisis in 2008 and recently the prime minister, implicated in the Panama Papers scandal, resigned. The justice taken may be warranted, but still, we, the public, have to work on ourselves.

Attracting serious attention

There is no stigma against premarital sex in Iceland and many kids grow up in broken homes making Iceland's family institution as weak as is its religious life. Still, there is some interest. Recently, I received inspiration to make signs that I hoped would get the attention of both Christians and non-believers. One sign reads, "Christ did not come to die for our sins." The other reads, "What God is saying today." For five weeks, I have spent Saturdays and Sundays standing by these signs. The main attraction is the one about Christ. Christians stop and retort, Yes, he did.

No, he didn't, I respond, He came to establish the kingdom of heaven on earth.

From there they realize I am not against Jesus. I tell them how Christ did die for our sins and explain what the Divine Principle teaches. Since beginning with the signs, a couple of passionate Christians have stopped, phoned and met for further discussions; one now has *As a Peace-Loving Global Citizen* and the another has the *Exposition of the Divine Principle*.

Having people stop on their own volition, is good news, which is why I am sharing this with you. While this isn't yet a testimony about how I brought in new spiritual children or even someone to a workshop, it is a method others might like to try because people with interest are stopping. Here in the northern hemisphere, it's summertime and people can comfortably take some time to talk if they'd like. For those who are looking for something that gets people to stop, give it a try!