

One of the most successful 1975 Unification Church Missions is in Liberia

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In May Reverend Sun Myung Moon, founder of the Unification Church International, sent missionaries to 127 nations of the world to spread the Divine Principle message of hope and unification.

After several months of intensive study of Divine Principle, Unification Thought and Victory over Communism at Barrytown (New York) International Training Center, and practical experience in teaching, fundraising and witnessing, as well as researching information about their respective nations, the enthusiastic young missionaries departed for their mission fields.

One of the most successful missions to date has been that in the Republic of Liberia, Africa's oldest independent republic. Liberia, a coastal nation in West Africa whose very name means "land of liberty," was established in the 1820s by a colony of freed American slaves of African descent. It became independent in 1847, but maintains close ties to the United States.

The American missionary to Liberia arrived on May 15, and his letter of June 2 reported spending his first two and a half weeks exploring the capital city of Monrovia, named for U.S. President James Monroe, and learning about Liberian life and customs. "Monrovia," he reported, "is similar to most American cities -- even to traffic jams and everybody wanting a tip. Africa is a place of tremendous physical beauty.

"Historically, there has been a close connection between Liberia and the United States since the founding of the republic," he wrote. "English is the official language of the country, facilitating my work here. Also, U.S. interests in Liberian rubber, iron ore and other resources have fostered an awareness of, and a duplication of, some American customs. In many ways Monrovia is like a small town in the United States."

And as in the U.S.A., "Kung-Fu movies are very popular," in this case imported from mainland China. "I've noticed that Chinese, as well as European, merchandise is prevalent in the small shops, which are largely owned by Lebanese merchants." I'm investigating a job at the University of Liberia teaching English literature and grammar, as a way of serving the people and getting to know some students better," he reported. The university is government-sponsored and has 2,000 students. It is one of Liberia's three institutions of higher learning. The other two are sponsored by the Episcopal and Roman Catholic Churches.

"Education appears to be one of the primary needs of this nation." Of Liberia's local population, only 23.6 percent are literate, and until World War II education was provided for the most part by missionary and charitable organizations, generally from the United States. Since then there has been considerable expansion of government schools, but only one-third of the school age children can attend, and two-thirds of those drop out in their first three years.

Our missionary's June 2 letter continues, "I've met a small number of people who are interested in our work, and have been meeting with them every day or two, developing our friendship. My friends represent a cross-section of Liberian society -- high school students, university students, middle-class workers with families, and also some government officials. Thus far Liberians have been generally friendly and helpful to me, and I'm looking forward to living here in Monrovia."

He said he had spoken at the university and about 60 students attended. All three missionaries met with two high school principals and both were very impressed with *The Day of Hope in Review*, a yearbook-style report of Reverend Moon's activities in America in 1972 and 1973, showing in photographs, reprints of newspaper and magazine articles, and excerpts from his speeches his purpose and the scope of his activities in leading the movement during that time. The American missionary subsequently addressed student body assemblies in both schools, one with 150 students and the other with 200.

"With the help of the 12 boys who are closest to us, we've distributed 100 copies of the first part of Reverend Moon's talk, 'God's Hope for Man,' and this week about 100 copies so far of part of his talk entitled 'God's Way of Life.' Religious material is very popular reading matter here," he writes.

Many of those who can read are Christians, although in Liberia's population as a whole the Christians comprise only seven percent. Three percent are Muslims, and most -- 90 percent -- are tribal peoples holding traditional animistic religious beliefs.

"Through a member in the New Hope Singers International we've contacted A.B. Tolbert, Jr., who is the son of Liberia's President Tolbert. Mr. Tolbert is also ambassador-at-large. He met the Family last October in New York and is highly positive. I've seen him twice, and through him we'll meet the cabinet ministers and the president. He has already prepared letters of introduction for us; we're just waiting for the right time to use them. A.B. Tolbert asked me to prepare a speech on 'Unifying Liberia with the Unification Thought of Reverend Sun Myung Moon.' The whole thing was his idea.

"This week should see the formation of our Liberian Collegiate Association for the Research of Principles (L-CARP), using students who attended my talk this morning at the university. Several in particular are very interested in studying Reverend Moon's Unification Thought further. One fellow is a Muslim and several are Christians. This week we'll have posters up at the campus and around town with Reverend Moon's picture and the single world 'Unification.'

"I am now working at the University of Liberia as a teaching assistant in the English department. At the university we have had our first CARP meeting, and seven very interested students attended. With their help we will plan a solid CARP program for the coming semester emphasizing Unification Thought, as well as mimeographing materials which they have volunteered to hand out to high school students.

"I have now spoken publicly several times. On June 27 I spoke at a university assembly to approximately 60 students on 'God's Way of Life.' The speech was very well received and Reverend Moon's name is now widely known across campus.

"On June 30 I spoke to an assembly of 200 high school students at Newport Street Junior High School -- with the lights out due to a rainstorm! The topic of the speech was 'The End of the World.'

"July 2, also at Newport Street Junior High, I spoke to a class of 30. We discussed the Unification Thought 'Theory of Education,' which was also very well received.

"On July 4 we had a brief announcement on TV about my coming to Liberia to represent Reverend Moon.

"July 9 I spoke on the 'Theory of Education' again, this time at a CARP meeting attended by nine students. Seven stayed for discussion afterwards, and all seven want to meet regularly to learn more about our work. Two boys will lead the club and both are enthusiastic. Generally, I have found Liberians to offer help easily and sincerely.

"July 9 I spoke at Newport Junior High School again to about 150 junior high students for the installation of their student council officers. My topic was 'God's Need for Young People as Leaders.' Again, the address was well received, and I was invited to speak to another class of about 30 students on July 14.

"On July 14 I will also be speaking to an assembly at City Hall in Robertsport," an inland city built on the promontories of Cape Mount, some 1,068 feet above sea level. "About 300 to 500 people are expected. We were invited to come by the superintendent (comparable to the governor) of Grand Cape Mount County, one of Liberia's nine counties."

Our missionary reported progress on their plans to establish a Unification Church Junior High School. "Four friends have said they would teach, in addition to our German missionary sister, making a total of

five teachers. We will have grades 5, 6, 7 and 8.

Probably we will attract a number of adults, as we're going to teach at night from 6:30 p.m. to 10:00 p.m. Then through them we'll reach their families. Divine Principle will be taught to all grades as part of the religion curriculum. Other subjects to be offered are English, math, science and social studies. We expect 40 students for the first semester, and then we can expand from there.

"Thus far we have had friendly contact with some pastors in town, and a few missionaries. However, we have thus far done little to go beyond the level of just attending services. Soon -- in the next two to three weeks -- I expect to speak in several churches, and to distribute mimeographed copies of 'The New Future of Christianity' to a select number of people -- 50 or so. We have already distributed 100 'God's Hope for Man' and 150 'God's Way of Life.'"

From letter of July 18, 1975: "We have begun public Sunday services. Three people attended the first week. For this coming Sunday we were invited to hold services at a junior high school auditorium by the principal of the school.

"We met with the President of Liberia on July 15.

From letter of July 23, 1975: "Last Sunday, 14 of us sang at Robertsport City Hall to a crowd of about 40 people, and I spoke on 'Unification.' It was our second visit to Robertsport.

"President Tolbert established a committee to review our work and make recommendations. We bumped into the minister of justice on our way to Robertsport on Sunday, and I expect similar incidents will put us in touch with other cabinet ministers as well. This fellow met us because his truck got a flat tire and we served him by giving him a lift.

"Many other top officials now know of our work including the president and vice president of the university, the minister of labor, and four members of the Supreme Court including the chief justice."

From letter of July 30, 1975: "I am happy to write again, as Heavenly Father has continued to bless our work here. Truly, miracles are commonplace now, and Father's love is pouring down from Heaven, through the Divine Principle message, to thirsty mankind.

"We made a trip on July 26 to Gbarnga, a city 130 miles away, for Liberia's Independence Day. We had hoped to sing as a choir -- Unified Family Singers -- but didn't. However, we did talk informally with President Tolbert, and he posed for a picture with us.

"We have begun selling ginseng tea with four members assisting the Japanese missionary. Sales are good. Almost all our samples have been sold, and we've ordered more from Korea.

"We are still going to meet with seven cabinet ministers and top officials at the president's request, and I do hope to obtain a copy of the Madison Square Garden film about Reverend Moon's 1974 eight-city speaking tour in the United States, or the film about Korea's Little Angels, the famous children's dance company which Reverend Moon also founded, to show to them."

From letter of August 8, 1975: "During the past two weeks our Unification Church Junior High School opened. I began teaching English at the University of Liberia; Divine Principle lecture training began for two brothers; our Unified Family Singers auditioned for ELWA radio, sang in one church, and will sing in another; I spoke to about 70 people at a church in Buchanan, and to another group at a karate school in Monrovia; we held our first real Saturday workshop; we completed the first 21-day training program, and will begin another; we held a CARP meeting and have now planned general campus strategy; and our radio interview was finally aired, favorably mentioning our work in general, and specifically our junior high school and Koshin Trading Company."

Best of all, "We met with various cabinet ministers, seeking government support of our work. The meeting was favorable overall."

From letter of August 19, 1975: "Right now our focus is on developing core members, as a good number of Liberians have accepted Divine Principle but we need to deepen their understanding and awaken their desire to serve selflessly. This is quite a challenge.

"Incidentally, communist literature is profuse here in Liberia -- in government offices and at the university. Also, at the Chamber of Commerce I was shocked to find a picture of Kim Il-Sung on the bulletin board, along with some of his speeches. Apparently the material was put there following the signing of some new trade agreements between North Korea and Liberia.

Also, Russian language is to be taught shortly (next semester, I believe) when a man from the U.S.S.R.

and another from the Soviet Embassy arrives. The president of the University of Liberia is currently visiting some universities in Russia, along with Frank Tolbert, the brother of the Liberian president. A scholarship program between Romania and Liberia was set up, and I heard that some students who originally went for a five-year scholarship program returned to Liberia after just one month, because conditions in Romania were too restrictive. I will talk with one of those students, who is in one of my English classes."

From letter of August 27, 1975: "Enrollment in our junior high school is now up to 21 students. Classes have been held for three weeks now.

"We now have 19 members, 14 of whom are Africans. Three CARP meetings have been held so far this semester, and we taught Divine Principle itself. Three or four students who attended have read 'The New Future of Christianity' and accept it.

"Our choir sang at two churches in Monrovia for congregations of 50 (AME Zion) and 150 (Methodist). We were well received in both."

Public speaking continues: "The American missionary gave an introductory speech in a church in the city of Buchanan on August 3, and met with them again on the 23 and 24 to teach 'The Fall of Man.' In addition, about 20 youth leaders from different parts of the nationwide 'Gospel League Youth Fellowship' attended three meetings which we held on the 23 and 24 of August. We were favorably received, and expect a return invitation for September "During this past month we met with a committee of government officials established by the president to review our work. We have not yet found out their feelings as a group about our meeting with them, and any recommendations which they might have made to the president, but several individuals were personally very friendly after the meeting adjourned, and subsequently were helpful to us.

"We me requesting an International One World Crusade (IOWC) team of 10 to 30 brothers and sisters be sent as soon as possible to assist in the work in Liberia. We can arrange for lodging, visas, food and transportation."