

## In Remembrance – Friedrich Otto Piepenburg

Hildegard Piepenburg  
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*By Hildegard and Family with Love*

Friedrich Otto Piepenburg was born in Füssen in the Allgäu (southern Germany) on 25.04.1953, the first son of Friedrich and Ermelinde Piepenburg. His father was from Pomerania and his mother from Swabia. He and his brother Otto had a happy childhood and youth and were closely connected to the Protestant Church.

After the abitur (school leaving certificate), he did his military service with the navy in Flensburg and France, being drawn to the expanse of the sea and foreign countries. In October 1974, just after he had started to study geology at the University of Freiburg, he was introduced to the Unification Church by Bohdan Faryma. Since he had already had a spiritual awakening with Christianity, he was very quickly able to grasp the message of the Divine Principle and its urgency and immediately gave up his studies in order to devote himself full-time to the student organization CARP (Collegiate Association for the Research of Principles) in Frankfurt.

To encourage peace and reconciliation between world religions, Rev. Moon sent missionaries from Japan, USA and Germany to 95 countries in 1975. One of these courageous pioneers was Fritz, who undertook this task in Sanaa, the capital of what was then North Yemen, where he would work for the next 21 years. Fritz, the German, Yoshinori, the Japanese, and Mark, the American, plunged into the Arabian world. This was an experience which Fritz later loved to describe as being like a fairy-tale from the 'Thousand and One Nights'. From 1978 onwards, Fritz remained as the only representative of the Unification Movement in Yemen, being supported time for time by Matthias Wiesner and

Wolfgang Schwaller. During these long years, he came to deeply love and value the fascinating country, the Islamic faith, the language and culture and most of all the people of Arabia – connections that lasted a lifetime.

He was able to establish himself as a German and Arabic language teacher for developmental organizations such as DED and GTZ and for the German embassy, and with the Yemen edition of the Cyprus based Middle East Times, he established the first English weekly newspaper in North Yemen. During this time he liked to write and earned a good reputation for a travel guide which he wrote about this exotic country on the tip of the Arabian Peninsula.

As a representative of the Unification Movement, he organized local conferences for the Professors' World Peace Academy (PWPA) and accompanied representatives from Yemen in the fields of media, politics and religion to international conferences. Of special significance was the connection between the then 80 year old Grand Mufti of Yemen, Ahmad Muhammad Zabarah and Rev. Moon that developed when the Mufti attended the Assembly of World Religions in San Francisco in 1990. In 1991, Mufti Zabarah and his wife brought a delegation of 40 chosen Yemenites to a Divine Principle seminar in New York and in 1992 in Seoul, they and ten other couples from Yemen participated in the first marriage

Blessing for members of other religions. Fritz brought a delegation of high ranking women from Yemen to the founding event of the world wide Women's Federation for World Peace (WFWP) with Mrs. Hak Ja Han Moon in Cairo.



Following this, he supported a group of Japanese women from WFWP in their social work in Yemen.

Fritz was matched to Hildegard Müller by Rev. Moon and they participated in the 6000 couple Blessing on 14 October 1982 in Korea. When Hildegard came to Yemen in 1985, she supported Fritz in his mission and a wonderful new time together as a family began. Their children Hanna, Johann and Achim were born in Yemen. With the outbreak of civil war between North and South Yemen, Hildegard returned to Germany with the three children, where their fourth child, Lisa, was born. In 1996, Fritz handed over his mission in Yemen to his Korean successor, and brought his family to Lima, Peru the following year, responding to the call from True Parents for National Messiahs.

Here they worked closely with the Korean family Hong, the Japanese family Watanabe, and the British family Jones, to develop and implement programmes to support marriage and the family. This was an exciting time filled with interesting activities and new impressions and with the help of Japanese missionaries and Peruvian members, large marriage Blessings took place. It was greatly enriching for the whole family to discover the heart of South America, its wealth of cultural treasures, and to learn a new language and mentality, and despite the short time, this experience left a lasting impression.

After their return to Germany in the summer of 1999, Fritz took over the leadership of the PR department of the Unification Church in close cooperation with national leader Karl-Christian Hausmann. Publications, conferences and lobby work for religious freedom during the campaign to lift the Schengen ban on Rev. and Mrs. Moon – these were just some of the many tasks that Fritz willingly tackled.

Between 2005 and 2006, Fritz was given the responsibility of leadership of the German Unification Church – a very intensive time during which he and many German members contributed to the success of Rev. Moon and his wife's speaking tours by their investment not only in Germany, but also on a European level. Together with his successors Dieter Schmidt, and Karl-Christian Hausmann as president the Universal Peace Federation (UPF – founded in 2005), Fritz made essential contributions between 2006 and 2015 to the development of the Unification Movement in Germany, in his functions as UPF secretary general and vice president of the Family Federation.

And on top of this, he was pastor to the Frankfurt community, supported by Claus Dubisz, Margaret Staudinger and Monika Kunde.

He initiated many of the publications from the KANDO publishing house over these 15 years, from Blickpunkt Vereinigungskirche (Focus on the Unification Church), to the UPF conference series, the 40 years Unification Church in Germany to Rev. Moon's autobiography, As a Peace Loving Citizen. In the final week of his life, Fritz and his helpers set up a stand at the Frankfurt book fair to introduce the World Scripture, a compilation of religious texts, as well as other publications, to a wide public.

This is only a short summary that can in no way do justice to Fritz Piepenburg's full and rich life. Whether it was the international trips in the course of his many duties, or organizational challenges, or the shouldering of unpleasant tasks – Fritz always made himself whole-heartedly available; one could depend on him.

His good nature, readiness to help and reliability were expressed in his leadership style as well as in his private life and he valued and respected each person as a son or daughter of God, regardless of social position, world-view or skin colour.



Fritz was a wonderful son, brother, husband, father and son-in-law. He loved music and played piano, guitar and flute. His children inherited this ability, and nothing pleased him more than to play music with the family at home. We have to thank him for the many memorable musical contributions to national level German celebrations, as well as to local community events. And his musical commitment went beyond his own religious community and family, whether it was his participation in the nativity plays in the local church or in performances with the local Catholic or Protestant church choirs.

His personal further education was always important to him. So at the age of 50, he became an active member of the sailing club of Hochheim, learned to sail and became himself an instructor. He completed training as choir leader, and at the age of 60 began to take lessons in playing the organ.

One of his favourite hobbies was reading. Besides the daily readings of Holy Scriptures, he was inspired by books about sailing round the world, history, different cultures and outstanding people. And he valued especially the teaching of Confucius and any tradition that encouraged peaceful coexistence. He loved traditional family celebrations like Christmas. He took it to heart, not only to learn for himself, but to pass on what he learnt.

Mountaineering and sailing were also his passions and his love for nature and the simple life were especially expressed in the way he designed his own house and garden. There was nothing that he did not try: he learned how to be a handyman so that he could do repairs in the home, and planted fruit and vegetables. He was enthusiastic about salad from his own garden or homemade fruit juices and jams. He loved looking for mushrooms or berries in the woods near his home, and with his sons prepared wood to burn in the winter. He was able to identify many birds in the woods by their song.

In the last week of his life, he participated in two demonstrations, was at the stand in the Frankfurt book fair, wrote reports and prepared the garden for winter. The heart attack struck him suddenly and unexpectedly in his prime.

We, his family miss him very much. We would have liked so much to have had many more wonderful days with him. He was well balanced and in harmony with himself, a deep ocean, our 'solid rock', a real example. His faith in God and True Parents never wavered – he set the course for us. We are proud of him, and wish him a blessed start in his spirit life. He is breaking new grounds and leaves behind a great legacy for us all.

We will remember him with deep gratitude.

