

A Tribute to Our Foreign Missionaries

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Paul and Christel Werner with True Parents (1970s)

German Missionaries Receive the Call

That special day in March 1975 is unforgettable. It was the day when we received the order from our True Parents to send out missionaries from Germany to 120 Nations within a time-frame of about six weeks. We were responsible for the mission in Germany, but the call reached us in Pasadena, California, where we were leading the German IOWC Team, composed of 70 of the older and more seasoned German members, in the "Day of Hope Campaigns" in the USA.

When Father transferred us from Austria to take over the mission in Germany after our blessing in 1969, we had started our new mission on May 11, 1969 with a small group of members. With God's blessings on our witnessing activities our membership increased very rapidly, and by the end of 1974 we had sent out several hundred members to the US and European countries as well as to Australia, New Zealand and India.

At the time True Parents' call reached us, our first reaction to this historic undertaking was anxiety and a somber feeling of responsibility for the lives of these young members, young in years as well as in membership of and experiences in our movement. But this was God's call, and He would have to give our precious spiritual children the protection they so desperately needed and we alone were not able to provide.

We immediately took a plane from Los Angeles to Frankfurt and, while flying across the Atlantic, we started making plans as to the logistics of this huge task of assigning a mission country to each one of our members who volunteered to take part in this historic endeavor, and to prepare them spiritually as well as physically for their mission work. Visas and plane tickets to countries around the globe, from Afghanistan to Yemen, even to destinations as far away as Tonga and Fiji in the South Pacific, had to be obtained and appointments made for all the required immunization shots. A folder was prepared for each country, covering the most important points pertaining to language and culture, including the address of the nearest German Embassy in case of emergency. Our members in the office in our Training Center in Camberg did a marvelous job in helping us organize every little detail of this monumental endeavor. We were really blessed to have so many totally devoted members helping us in these preparations.

After arriving at our Training Center, while looking at all our assembled young missionaries, my feelings for each one of them were overwhelming. When we all joined together in singing the song all of us knew so well, it took on a deeper, more personal meaning, and many tears were shed:

*The heart of my country beckons to me
To fill its emptiness.
My Father long has spoken to me,
His desire this land to bless.
He sends me on to life unknown*

*to work in a far off place.
He loves that land before I come,
And through me He'll give it grace.*



Missionaries went from Germany, Japan and the United States to nations all over the world in the spring of 1975

Our personal responsibility was enormous, yet this was clearly Heavenly Father's plan, and He assured us in our prayers that He would always protect His own. But our young members had to be prepared to act responsibly and take every precaution to survive unharmed and to be successful in their missions.

Meanwhile in the US, Father told the American missionaries: "By my sending you out to so many nations, our message and way of life will spread to every corner of the earth. You are to serve the people in your nation. That, which was done for others and left for the benefit of the future, is remembered by later generations". These were His words to our German missionaries as well.

In one of His speeches in the "The Way of God's Will" Father said: "God wishes to visit every corner of the world He created. But He especially wants to visit those places in which His children are sincerely preparing the foundation of loyalty. As the children of God, therefore, you must pioneer the end of the world and then invite Him."

The remaining days in Camberg were spent in many unforgettable meetings of physical and spiritual preparations, incl. our instructions to the missionaries to inform us immediately of their safe arrival by whatever means possible

and to keep in touch regularly. Our young missionaries did so faithfully, enabling us to keep connected by sending them all the news about our activities in Germany and, most importantly, about True Parents' work internationally incl. the newest photos of True Parents.



The training center in Camberg, Germany

Going Out to the World

As always, Paul took Father's requests very seriously, meaning, our missionaries had to be in their mission fields before the deadline of May 1, 1975. Therefore, all of them were on their way in April 1975 and were the first to arrive in all the mission countries. After the last one of them left, our Training Center in Camberg felt quite empty, and we personally felt the heavy burden of our responsibility for the lives of these precious young members, praying for their protection during many a sleepless night and were relieved only after getting their messages one by one, that they had arrived in their mission countries safe and sound. Needless to say, some of them were truly shocked by the primitive, poor, unsanitary and even dangerous conditions they encountered upon their arrival, not only in countries ravaged by civil war, such as Burundi and Rwanda in central Africa, or during upheavals in Nicaragua in Central America as well as the dangerous situation in Chile at the tip of South America, but in many other nations as well. Yet they

were determined to persevere to fulfill their missions. This was only the beginning of a long road to be traveled, and we felt responsible for each one of them, keeping in touch even after our own missions changed.

After their blessing at Madison Square Garden in 1982 the missionaries returned to their mission field, many of them with their spouses, started their family life and raised children under difficult conditions, some in African countries, in Middle Eastern countries such as Yemen, or in South America.

I remember one family in particular, Fritz and Hildegard Piepenburg. Hilde gave birth to several of her children in Sanaa, Yemen. They had very good contacts there, but when things changed politically, all foreigners had to leave the country on short notice for safety reasons, taking with them only what they were able to carry. This meant with practically nothing, as Hilde had her hands full just to get out with her children. Exactly at that time we met Fritz Piepenburg, Hildegard's husband, in Korea, where some of the missionaries were attending Holy Day Celebrations with True Parents. When I asked him about his family, he was deeply concerned as he had no idea whether his wife and children had caught one of the last planes out of the country in time. Paul and I felt deeply troubled and prayed for their safety. Later we learned that they had arrived safely in Germany and we sent our gratitude to Heaven.

Fritz died suddenly of a heart attack in 2015. It was a shock to the family and to all of us, but Hilde took over his mission and is very active as part of a Leadership-Trinity in Germany.



Missionaries and members celebrate Children's Day together in one African country

Heavenly Parent and True Parents' Pride

Young and inexperienced as they were, these missionaries overcame all hardships, adjusted to different cultures and languages in lands unknown, persevered under primitive and dangerous conditions unknown to most people, and laid a solid worldwide foundation by bringing the message of hope to their particular country and by leading a life of selflessly loving and serving others. To this day, our prayers are with them and their families, grateful for their deep faith, their dedication, sacrifices and love for their mission countries. Our Heavenly Parent, True Parents and all of us are very proud of them.

It is my hope that their unique and inspiring stories of service and sacrifice under the most difficult and sometimes life threatening circumstances are being written down as a testimony to the everlasting love and guidance of our loving Heavenly Parent and our True Parents for the benefit of generations to come. They will surely touch the hearts of their readers.

Paul and I are forever grateful for their unconditional devotion, their deep heart, their faith and their unwavering dedication. They are truly our unsung heroes.