

‘Reign of Terror’ Reversed in Uganda

One megachurch pastor, Robert Kayanja, says 92 percent of his country is now Christian

Twenty-five years ago in Uganda, a person might have been considered foolish if they had admitted to being a born-again Christian. Today, if you’re not a born-again Christian, Ugandans might ask: “What are you waiting for?”

That’s how pastor Robert Kayanja described the current spiritual state of his homeland, a country that was ravaged by dictator Idi Amin and others before a spiritual breakthrough in the 1980s and 1990s swept the majority of the population into Christianity.

Today, 92 percent of Uganda’s population of 24 million claim Christianity, and at least 75 percent of those are legitimate born-again Christians, said Kayanja, who pastors the charismatic megachurch Miracle Center Cathedral in Kampala, the capital.

Kyanja, 37, said Miracle Center’s \$7 million, 10,500-seat sanctuary is filled four times for Sunday services and once on Friday night for a meeting geared for troubled youth, prostitutes and other prime salvation candidates. After the terrors of Amin and the dictators who followed him, Kayanja noted how “it is incredible to see thousands of people” lined up for miles walking barefoot through Kampala just to come to church.

Like other African nations, Uganda was nearly ruined by the

exploits of despots, many of whom named Allah as their god and practiced political corruption that left the general populace starving.

Amin's reign of terror from 1971-79 caused so much damage that it has taken 25 years for the nation to heal, Kayanja told Charisma. Amin gained the attention and admiration of his superiors in the Ugandan army by becoming the nation's heavyweight boxing champion, a title he retained from 1951 to 1960. He was promoted to army captain by 1963 and rapidly promoted to colonel and deputy commander of the army in 1964.

Then-Prime Minister Milton Obote promoted Amin to commander of Uganda's armed forces after Amin stopped a coup attempt against Obote. But in January 1971, Amin learned of Obote's plan to arrest him for stealing millions of dollars in military funds. Amin organized his own coup and overthrew Obote while the prime minister was out of the country.

That began Amin's murderous reign in Uganda, when he ordered the massacre of hundreds of troops suspected of being loyal to Obote. In 1972 Israel and Britain refused Amin's requests for large increases in military funding. In retaliation, Amin expelled those countries' advisers and turned to the Arab republic of Libya for support.

Amin, known as "The Butcher of Uganda," became the first black African leader to renounce ties with the Jewish state of Israel and to side instead with Islamic nations in the Middle East over the Palestinian issue. Also in 1972, Amin announced that God had told him to expel Uganda's Indian and Pakistani populations, who owned almost all of Uganda's businesses.

After an attempt by Obote failed to retake the government in 1972, Amin sent roving squads of thugs into Ugandan cities, killing anyone who criticized him or appeared to be a threat to his power. Victims were found dismembered and horribly mutilated.

Some estimate that Amin killed between 300,000 and 500,000 people during his reign. The dictator eventually fled Uganda after neighboring Tanzania invaded to oust him in 1979. Currently he lives in exile in Saudi Arabia.

"The morality of the nation was totally destroyed," Kayanja acknowledged. "He raped the whole country of morality, of integrity. He implemented a trend of corruption in a people who were not corrupt. He raised a generation of people who wanted to steal rather than to work for personal gain. He left the church on crutches."

Even worse dictators followed Amin's exile in 1979, Kayanja said, but one of many spiritual-warfare victories helped turned the tide back to the church, he said.

"A witch who challenged me [in 1983] said I would be dead in three days," Kayanja said. "Instead, the witch died. They found his body in the middle of the road, his severed head lying on the roadside. His family came and took his body, and they moved away."

Kyanja said that the night before, he had had a dream in which God handed him a sword to fight the enemy. When Kyanja saw the witch's severed head, he knew that God "had dealt with this man," he said.

"We heard a car crash that night, but we didn't find the car," Kayanja said. "After his family moved away, revival broke out."

Miracle Center Cathedral has planted more than 1,000 churches across Uganda, and with help from evangelists such as Reinhard Bonnke, T.L. Osborn and others, millions of Ugandans have become Christians, some 2.2 million in crusades led by Kayanja's teams alone.

"Twenty-five years ago, 22 percent of the population were Muslims," Kayanja said. "Today, only 6 percent are Muslims."

Miracles have been sweeping the country, as key leaders in the government, military and the business community have been born again, Kayanja said. In 1986, current President Yoweri Museveni came to power. Museveni and his wife, Janet, are strong Christians, and the couple have helped turn Uganda around, politically and economically, Kayanja said.

Miracle Center now feeds, clothes and ministers to Kampala's 20,000 street children. The church fights for the survival of Uganda's 4 million orphans, of which Kayanja estimated that 2 million are children of parents who have died in the country's ongoing AIDS epidemic. Kayanja said God has healed many people of AIDS, including a government agricultural official who, after his healing, gave up his career and is now a staff pastor at the church.

Kyanja said God has told him to begin taking the gospel around the world, and teams from Miracle Center have gone into South America, Japan and the United States.

A South Korean Buddhist woman, who was in a coma and was healed after Kayanja prayed for her, asked him what she could do to help his church in Uganda.

“She gave us the \$3.5 million we needed to install glass on the cathedral,” Kayanja said.

Although Museveni’s current term is up in 3-1/2 years, Kayanja seemed unfazed at any potential political upheaval from rebels still lurking in Uganda’s north.

“God has shown Himself faithful in mighty ways and will continue to do so,” he said.

Billy Bruce