

The 1975 Unification Church Missionaries reunion at UTS Barrytown

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I just walked in, late, to one of our final sessions for the day. Some of the earliest Unification missionaries and their spouses are seated in a circle with Dr. and Mrs. Balcomb and Mari Curry, presidential couple and vice president of the Family Federation for World Peace and Unification (FFWPU) USA, for a question-and-answer session. I don't know what was said before I entered the room, but the energy is excellent. It's openly inquisitive, unafraid, genuinely concerned, present—there's a wealth of practical and spiritual knowledge concentrated in the circle of individuals gathered here, in this miniature expression of our community of faith.

I'm not sure what could be a more appropriate image of what this weekend has been like so far. We began with a banquet yesterday, featuring brief remarks by Dr. Ki Hoon Kim, Vice President of the Family Federation International, and introductions by each of the weekend's guests of honor: the American, Japanese, and German missionaries sent all around the world to bear witness to True Parents and the Divine Principle in 1975. It was difficult during the banquet, at times, to keep everyone's attention on the program since there was so much natural affection among the missionaries and interest in one another. Many haven't seen each other in years.



But we brought the evening to a satisfying and more-or-less focused close, the sense of community and solidarity undeniable, with a promise of more good things to come.

Which brings us to today.

Since starting the day with Hoon Dok Hae readings on True Parents' philosophy of life and peace at the relatively early hour of 6:00 a.m. (our veteran missionaries are probably used to a standard of faith that would require an even earlier start), they've been caught up in a flurry of activity. They shared testimonies after breakfast, went on guided tours of the UTS trails with Dr. Tyler Hendricks, attended the 41st commencement ceremony of UTS (story coming soon), where they were honored for their years of dedication and service to True Parents, all before reaching this moment and while simultaneously stepping out to give video interviews for posterity all day, over in the library.



Our full day is now, almost, coming to a close as missionaries and Generation Peace Academy (GPA) participants sit grouped together in intense and excited conversation all throughout one of the UTS lecture halls. This is the moment I was most looking forward to, a sort of meeting of the missionaries from multiple generations. In a moment like this, there's a clarity of common experience and camaraderie so purely felt but so rarely discovered in our day-to-day lives that you can't help but stop and take a moment to breathe it all in. The joy in the room is palpable.

That being said, I was reminded by a co-worker that this degree of rapport is always available to us as a movement. These missionaries, the spiritual parents of our movement, are also the peers and the elders of our own parents; they are our neighbors in the pews and the chairs of our churches and community centers—even our homes—though we're sometimes quick to forget and slow to remember that.

Here's to remembering, then, and looking forward to the future we are building together. I think all of us who have had the opportunity this weekend to join in this reunion of the saints and pioneers of the international Unification movement would join me in saying we wish you were here—and look forward to seeing you the next time around.

