

CARP USA: CARP in the City of Brotherly Love, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

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It's been a long time coming, but CARP Philadelphia has finally established a chapter for itself and officially became a club on campus this past February! I am so grateful for the multitudes of people that have hoped for and anticipated this time. I can proudly say on behalf of those who I work with that these beginnings would not have been possible without the support of National and Subregional CARP teams as well as the ongoing relationship and rapport with the Philadelphia Family Church. We were able to welcome Mr. Naokimi Ushiroda, President of Family Federation for World Peace and Unification USA, to the grand opening of our CARP apartment, hold a meeting with our local congregation, and clarify our identity as a campus ministry! Since then, we officially became a club at the Community College of Philadelphia (CCP) and our weekly meetings have been led by myself and two of our core members, who also happen to be my sisters.



President Naokimi Ushiroda visited CCP campus and the "CARP Apartment"

With the support of our advisor, we could host weekly meetings in a room and lead discussions based on

the CARP Curriculum. So far, we have touched upon "Religion and Science," "God or No God," and "Family and Marriage." The topics were voted on by those who participated in our kickoff meeting and we've been following the order since then. Each week, after our meetings, we as the core team would come out with renewed determinations on how to improve the following meeting. My highlight and source of inspiration has been being able to witness how we engage as core members and express our care and concern over CARP and the students. Although our meetings always have a few disagreements and compromises are required, there are inevitable laughter and joy. I truly feel grateful and indebted to those who collaborate with me in every way. Although the days leading up to our meetings are often filled with dread, as if we are going in to present a school project, when the day comes and we go forth with it, it ends up being such a great time. We all feel it every time.



CARP Philly's first on campus CARP meeting

The following is a written testimony of S. Wise, a regular at our club meetings:

"The CARP club at CCP has created a comfortable environment where I, personally, feel safe enough to share my honest opinions and values, and have those opinions respected and even celebrated. The club is a safe space for serious discussion with a variety of people who all think similarly, and if they don't, their views are appreciated and respected. The leaders of the club carefully prepare activities and materials for the members, and allow us to enjoy the act of learning and engagement. Even though there has only been a handful of sessions, the club has fostered camaraderie and intellectual fellowship, and most significantly, community is respected and appreciated."



Recent CARP Talks at Community College of Philadelphia



On that note, we are anticipating a half-day seminar on April 7th that will cover the core principles from which CARP derives its identity as a campus ministry! As of this week, we are putting a pause on the CARP meetings so the core members can meet and plan for our seminar - so for the time being, we will be enjoying an outing at the movies this Tuesday to watch Creed III!



In terms of personal growth, I want to touch upon my faith in this new year. My faith is growing along with discovering and expressing new emotions, too. These past few months have been nothing short of questioning, asking, seeking, and waiting. If I were to use a metaphor, sometimes I feel like all I could do is hold onto the one piece of a rock that represents the single truth I know, and it is sticking out from the ground and there is a storm around me. And the core of why I seem to be holding onto this piece of rock is due to the belief that I know I'm not seeing the whole picture and is the refusal to make a rash decision and to hold out until the storm passes. I seem to be so perplexed because I would have so many questions that makes me wonder if I will ever find any sound, intellectual answers. This is a milestone in my growth though because I used to be someone that halted when things became questionable. I used to have to stop and know - and to find out what was next before taking a step. Even though the state I am in is very uncomfortable, this conflicting state has been fulfilling because I can see just how much I've come to grow. If anything, it seems that all I care about these days are finishing what I started and in turn, I am relearning that the answers will come with time. Ironically, even with the questions and uncertainties I have in terms of my life of faith, I have also never felt God working so closely in my life. It's almost as if leading CARP has put me in a place to have fresh opportunities to re-examine my faith, my perspective and relationships, my roots, and all that I have come to know - and to simply put, rebuild myself as a child of God.



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