

FFWPU USA: Global Peace Academy (GPA) Celebrates its 2023 Graduation

Demian Dunkley
June 17, 2023



Photos courtesy of GPA

"I was able to meet people and find my true self - the person I've always wanted to be," said J.L., a recent GPA Cheon Il Guk Missionary graduate. "I realized, through this mission, that God was guiding me the whole entire time and was with me. I just had to open my eyes to see it. I thank God, because through this mission, I was able to receive so much love."



On June 17, graduates of Generation Peace Academy (GPA) were joined by their families and friends, alumni, and program leaders and staff for the 2023 commencement ceremony at the Unification Theological Seminary (UTS) in Barrytown, New York. The ceremony featured congratulatory remarks from various FFWPU USA leaders, graduate testimonies, and choral music before certificates were presented to the graduates.

"They've had so many transformations that are indescribable," Manhattan Family Church Pastor Rev. Miilhan Stephens noted during his opening prayer.

For six months - from November 2022 through April 2023 - participants of the three youth programs embarked on a journey of faith in the U.S. or abroad, sharing about the Unification movement through public outreach, fundraising, and activities geared toward internal and external development.

"Doing uncomfortable activities and going out of my comfort zone, I realized God was showing me the

courage to just be myself," said N.T., a third-year GPA graduate who spent the past year in the Heavenly USA program. "I realized the purpose of my life isn't to look good in front of others, or to please others, it's about building authentic, loving relationships, especially with God, True Parents, and my own parents."



"I'm excited to go back home and continue to discover the deep love [they] have for me and share it with my younger brothers and sisters," he said.



GPA Director Roland Platt recognized the widespread support from Unificationist leaders and community members during a precarious time. "We've faced unprecedented situations and challenges ... that impacted our worldwide movement," he said. "GPA cannot do all that it does in the year without the support of our leaders ... And we wouldn't be able to be here and stand here, and congratulate [graduates] and complete this year without our Heavenly Parent and True Parents."

Platt also encouraged graduates to hold on to inspiring experiences as they return home. "Every day when you're out there," he said, "you can remind yourself how much God has loved you, how much God has touched you in a special way. And a good way to remind ourselves of something is to share it with others; testify to others about what you experienced this year."



Rev. Naokimi Ushiroda reminded the graduating class of three key points going forward in their lives: God loves us, God wants us to grow, and God wants us to share our belief with others. "Our most important identity is as a child of God," he said during his remarks. "I think the deeper we can have this understanding, the more free, more powerful, and more loving [we] will naturally be and find a sense of peace in everything that [we] do."

From Thailand, newly appointed FFWPU USA President and Regional Chair Rev. Demian Dunkley shared a special video message with the group. He discussed the time of Jesus and the continuous conflict that has riddled human history, stating that, with True Parents, "[peace] is now within our grasp."



"I appreciate that each one of you has gone through a very unique and incredible journey," Rev. Dunkley said, before telling the graduates that "witnessing and sharing our blessing" is "our big mission."

"This is our destiny and original birthright," he said, "and True Parents are the gateway ... behind which great treasures and deeper truths are waiting to be revealed."

Congratulations to all the 2023 graduates!

You can watch the full GPA graduation ceremony [here](#)