

God's Hope for America Bus Tour - The Well-Tended Garden

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A well-meaning friend of mine who knows I've been on holy ground pilgrimage for over a month just asked me "Aren't you getting a little tired?"

Surprisingly, the answer is no. After travelling over 9,000 miles in 36 days, perhaps we should be tired. Yet with each passing day, our #godshopeforamerica pilgrimage is actually getting more energized, revived and fresh. It's an amazing testimony to the love of True Parents and the power and energy of almighty God, our Heavenly Parent.

It helps a lot that every holy ground is very different. Some are in city parks full of trees; others on lonely mountain peaks. Some are in domesticated, cultivated settings, others are wild and remote. In Tampa, the holy ground has become a zoo parking lot; in Washington DC, it's a tourist-filled area behind the White House. A few feel lonely and neglected, but most have been well-watered by the tears of the faithful. The difference in atmosphere is very easy to detect.

Holy Ground #45 in Sioux Falls, South Dakota, sits on the brow of a hill in Sherman Park next to several ancient Native American burial mounds. It feels like a peaceful, somber area, overlaid with a profound sense of melancholy that surely has its root in the sad history of the local Native Americans tribes. This is the land of the massacre of Wounded Knee and other shameful betrayals of our continent's original inhabitants.



Mayumi Hoffman, who with her American husband Dennis has lived and worshipped in the state for more than 21 years, has clearly been preparing for our visit for a long time. "I took many days off work," she said. "Work is always there, but the chance to serve True Parents may not be."

She shares her personal experience of True Parents' love and concern for the Native Americans, and their future, in particular relating the story of the efforts of years past to promote Family Values better youth education and above all share the blessing. "We gave a blessing to over 100,000 families," she said "and the blessing was broadcast on radio throughout the Sioux nation. I know that strong families are the only lasting answer to the challenges faced by Native American peoples."

In the course of preparing for our holy ground visit, Mayumi and Dennis have been working very hard, and it shows. For 78 days they have been coming to the holy ground every day to pray and ask God for

his guidance and mercy. They plan to carry on for another 42 days until 120 days—three times as long as the Holy Ground program, and three times as long as Jesus' lonely vigil in the wilderness.

We also hear testimony and prayer from another pioneer of the state, Edy Iversen, a widow now living in Paris. She and her late husband, Tom worked for years in Pierre, the State Capital, working to find good, holy men and women among the legislators and politicians, people could look beyond the borders of this huge but empty state to the good of the nation and the world.

As I pray in quiet solitude, surrounded by others but also alone with my Heavenly Parent, I feel the spirit of melancholy and loss being stripped away, replaced by a soaring sense of peace and stability. I see Father and Mother's smiling faces, telling me that they are victorious, and that the history of misery and failure will never have to be repeated. True Parents' presence is so real, so palpable, I am sure that I will see them if I open my eyes, though I know that's not literally true. Such is the result of all the weeks of prayer and dedication of the South Dakota family.

The scriptures tell us of the importance of taking care of the garden of one's heart, and how much God wants and expects us to revive ourselves as well as each other:

The Lord will guide you always; he will satisfy your needs in a sun-scorched land and will strengthen your frame. You will be like a well-watered garden, like a spring whose waters never fail.

Isaiah 58: 11 (NIV)

On this pilgrimage, we remember our accomplishments and honor those who worked hard; we revive ourselves and our movement, and most of all we imagine a great revival sweeping America to bring us all into a renewed relationship with God.