

True Father's Presence is Alive in Chicago

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The God's Hope for America bus arrived in Chicago on July 25

On July 25, the God's Hope for America bus arrived in Chicago, ready for a special cycling rally, "Peace Bike 2014," hoping for the re-unification of the Fatherland Korea. Sixty Unificationists, young and old, gathered in downtown Chicago near the Chicago Holy Ground. They held a banner and put flags on their bicycles, starting their ride from the busy Michigan Avenue and along a beautiful bike trail southward along Lake Shore Trail. Though it was just a one-hour rally, a lot of passion and high energy was felt among participants and spectators alike.



The Holy Ground is located in Grant Park South, downtown Chicago

The next day, Saturday, July 26, the American Clergy Leadership Conference (ACLC) in Chicago welcomed the God's Hope for America national pilgrimage bus at Pastor T. L. Barrett, Jr.'s Life Center Church of God in Christ. Over 250 men and women of faith gathered together as we held a special prayer breakfast. Life Center COGIC is a highly significant place for Unificationists. Not only is this church where True Father spoke during his historic 50-state speaking tour in 2001, but it also was the first Christian church in history to invite True Mother to speak in 1996 and to raise the Family Federation flag in 1997.

Two Unificationists who have greatly contributed to the breakthrough and growth of ACLC in Chicago, Dr. Ki Hoon Kim and Dr. Michael Jenkins, were unable to attend this event. However, they made sure they were present by other means. Dr. Ki Hoon Kim sent a special video message from Hawaii, which was shown at this prayer breakfast, and Dr. Michael Jenkins called the emcee of the program, Dr. Willie Weston Sr., by cell phone, allowing all the participants to hear his voice from afar.



We all shout, 'Chicago loves True Parents!'

The theme of this prayer breakfast was “God’s Hope for America”. Pastor Nena Bell (one of 172 clergy who went to Korea in 2011) read excerpts from True Father’s 1973 speech, “God’s Hope for America”. Then, a short video clip of True Father’s speech “America is God’s Hope” given at Yankee Stadium in 1976 was shown.

Next, Minister Fannie Smith, a board member of the Women’s Federation for World Peace and Unification (WFWP-USA) voiced an appeal for the “Citizens’ Apology” signature campaign by explaining True Father’s unjust Danbury imprisonment. Hundreds of signatures were collected during the program by clergy participants.

The main speaker was the host of the day, Pastor T. L. Barrett Jr. Pastor Barrett always refers to True Parents as his parents, saying, “As a son, I am so honored to preach based on my father’s word.” He also used the “God’s Hope for America” speech as the main text for his sermon. Throughout the following half hour, the audience enjoyed his message, full of love and respect towards True Father.



Pastor T. L. Barrett, Jr. preaches based on True Father’s words in 'God’s Hope for America'

During the Prayer Breakfast, Rev. Bruce Sutchar read the contents of a letter written by Illinois Governor Pat Quinn in appreciation for Rev. Sun Myung Moon as the initiator of the prayer event, its valuable role in our lives, and the efforts that our organization (FFWPU) has made over the years since 1969. He sent us his best wishes for an inspiring and memorable event on behalf of the citizens of Illinois.

Rev. Sutchar also presented a beautiful Certificate of Recognition, commemorating the effort, dedication and hard work which has led to the success of FFWPU and recognizing it as a valued Illinois institution for over 50 years. It also acknowledged this re-dedication of the Holy Ground during the "God's Hope for America" Tour. It was offered by State Rep. Michelle Mussman, who represents the district where many

of our members live and work.



Rev. Bruce Sutchar (center) and Mr. John Prevost (right) display the proclamations

After the prayer breakfast program finished, the congregation quickly moved to the original Holy Ground that True Father established in Grant Park, located in a prime spot in downtown Chicago.



Attendees sign the petition

First, Rev. Bruce Sutchar shared some of the history of Unificationism in Chicago. Then, three representatives gave short testimonies: Mr. John Ogden praised the work of True Parents and the missionaries who had laid their foundation in Chicago. Dr. Clyde Brooks (CEO of the Illinois Commission of Diversity and Human Rights, 172 clergy) appreciated True Father as one of the two people, next to Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., who have most impacted his life and his faith. He shared how his faith was challenged by True Father's messages when he went to Korea, but how he finally realized that blind acceptance of the Bible was not the right attitude to have as a Christian. He testified that his understanding towards the truth was deepened through True Father's teachings. Lastly, Unificationist-born Harumi Miyakawa thanked True Parents and her parents with tears when she explained the preciousness of the training she had received through her 3-year experience on the Generation Peace Academy (GPA).

The Community Unity Prayer Meeting was concluded with sincere prayers from Christian and Unificationist representatives followed by cheers led by District Pastor Rev. Kazuo Takami.

The next morning, during the Sunday Service, an elder Chicago Unificationist, Mr. TJ Wojtowicz, reported to the congregation that he saw (spiritually) True Father sitting in the circle at the Holy Ground during the testimonial time, on a chair with a big smile while he was massaging his foot in a familiar style that we all had witnessed so many times while True Father was on Earth. Once again, this confirms Dr. Balcomb's testimony of True Father's presence in the "God's Hope for America" pilgrimage.



Dr. Willie Weston, Sr. was the Master of Ceremony



Minister Fannie Smith appeals for a Citizens' Apology regarding True Father's Danbury imprisonment



Pastor Nena Bell reading the excerpts from True Father's speech, 'God's Hope for America'