

Concluding the 40th Anniversary of Father's Washington Monument Rally

Michael Balcomb
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We had a great weekend commemorating all that has been achieved by True Parents and those who have walked by their side during the last 40 years. On Sunday, services were held to conclude the weekend's activities and celebrate the commemorative rally at the National Mall.

We opened the day on a prayerful note with a prayer at the Holy Ground in Washington, D.C., consecrated by True Father when he first came to the United States in 1965. One hundred and fifty people came to pray in gratitude and rededicate themselves to the next four years of hope.

Sunday service was then held at La Fontaine Bleue, a beautiful venue in Lanham, Maryland. Over 600 Unificationists and guests attended from all over the nation, including *Cheon Il Guk* IWs, representatives from the American Clergy Leadership Conference, Universal Peace Federation, and Women's Federation for World Peace. The audience and even the band was an intergenerational mix, including 1976 Washington Monument Rally veterans and youth whose parents were a part of the original rally.

FFWPU District 1 Pastor, Rev. Ernest Patton, opened in prayer, offering to our Heavenly Parent our determination to continue building the new reality begun by True Father.

Emcee Shin Nan Goto, a second generation Unificationist whose parents also attended the original rally, opened the next part of the program, asking, "How better to send off this wonderful weekend than to hear your testimonies?" Eight individuals in total shared their reflections.



Chungbom Katayama, a member of the Las Vegas chapter of the Collegiate Association for the Research of Principles (CARP), took to the stage along with 14 other members of CARP LV, including four young, first-generation Unificationists and five Japanese *Cheon Il Guk* missionaries. They came to the East Coast to attend the America and God's Will Rally, and then embark on a pilgrimage to visit East Garden,

Belvedere and other places where True Parents' had invested a lot of their time and energy.

“I was born in Japan, and in my community I always felt a lot of love and unity,” began Chungbom. “But it’s difficult to connect to something so big as world peace, and it can be hard to see the big picture. Coming together in D.C. and hearing the same speech True Father gave 40 years ago was the first time I connected to the idea that America has such a big role in this world. Why America? Because America was built for the sake of God. It was a blessing to see the young and old generations coming together. I’m proud to be a second generation Unificationist whose parents fought, back in the day, for world peace. I felt this responsibility and an inspiration that it is really us, the young generation, that have to carry on this mission. And it’s not a burden anymore. Many times I felt it was a burden, but hearing True Father’s and True Mother’s speech gave me hope and so much inspiration to feel I want to be a part of this and this is the time to make it happen. These four years, we’ll see such a difference and you’ll make it happen, and I’ll make it happen.”

Chungbom concluded by sharing his plans to build a CARP chapter at his community college to study and share principles for peace together with other students.



Naria and Branch Gaarder, Unificationists and leaders in the Ocean Providence, then shared about their experience this year at the Global Top Gun workshop and how it shaped their outlook on yesterday’s rally. “The most inspiring thing about Global Top Gun was being able to spend time and get to know all the brothers and sisters from all over the world, second- and young first-generation Unificationists, and to see how much True Mother invested in us,” said Naria.

“Having gone to Top Gun and being taken care of so warmly by True Mother, I feel called to take ownership for what’s in my heart and my community,” added Branch. “I’m young and young at heart but I feel called to take responsibility for our country.”



Rev. Dr. Karen Thibodeaux, founder of the Lifeway Church of Dallas, and her husband Dr. Bishop David Thibodeaux, who attended and were appointed Ambassadors for Peace at the America and God's Will Commemoration Banquet on Friday, September 16, reflected on the meaning and the significance of the rally.

"Today we are still talking about the rally yesterday," began Rev. Karen Thibodeaux. "All night last night, my husband and I talked about different aspects of the event, but what I thought about the most was those young people that were there that will be here 40 years from now, alongside all of those who returned from 40 years ago. That was just a moment in time. I was so excited to be a part of that. We wouldn't have missed it for anything. This moment was so, so special."

The Thibodeauxs were part of the 172 clergy whom True Father charged to help heal the wounds and divisions of heart among the American people. "Now we see the urgency of it all," said Rev. Thibodeaux. "We want to go back to Texas and really see ACLC explode, especially now that we have the new Dallas Family Church facility."

Just as he was concluding his reflections, Dr. Bishop David Thibodeaux enthusiastically remarked, "Texas has been touched in a mighty way! There are others like us who are not Unificationists but want to know more, want to experience more, and want to be unified with you, and we are so thankful. We want to go home and share this vision with our church, share the greatness of family and how we can join together as a family and keep family first. When we're unified we can grow and move forward, and I thank God that we are moving forward. True Father's legacy is moving and touching lives everywhere!"

Once again veterans of the original rally were recognized, over 50 of whom stood up throughout the audience. A few then shared their testimonies.

Mary Oben from Bowie, Maryland talked about her role as a mobilizer for the 1976 rally, driving through the streets of Philadelphia with a bullhorn announcing, "September 18 can be your re-birthdate in Washington, D.C.!"



"The day of, bus after bus was driving down Route 95," she described. "It was unbelievable. You could really sense that, 'Wow, this is really happening.'" She then shared an experience at yesterday's rally, of meeting a woman who felt called to come to D.C. that day. "God wants to use every chance he gets to get out this message. Sometimes we think of it as a burden, but it was such a privilege to be out there. We can look at it as 'I have the privilege of sharing True Parents on this earth.'"

Bill Selig spoke about how he feels a sense of handing off the baton to the next generation. "My heart is fluttered with a lot of memories from 40 years ago," he said, "and yesterday was such a beautiful time to see our families there. We were there with our daughter, her husband, and our granddaughter. Forty years later, we weren't by ourselves; we had the second and third generation. The symbolism of Mr. Salonen, who had introduced True Father 40 years ago and who introduced Sun Jin Moon yesterday, was just perfect."



Andrew Compton, Director of Education at IPEC, commented, “The event 40 years ago, more than anything else, was a miracle. The miracle was the unity of heart of our members with True Parents. That, to me, is a miracle, looking back. After the Yankee Stadium Rally, True Father told us to go to the Washington Monument in 40 days. I was shocked, but we just believed. We just had faith, and we did it. We’re not a huge group here, but if we unite in heart with our True Parents, then that will be the miracle, and then God will work.”



FFWPU North America Continental Chairman, Dr. Ki Hoon Kim, gave the keynote address, first inviting FFWPU President Dr. Michael Balcomb to join him on stage in order to thank the District Pastors, IWs, local Unificationist community, and National Ministry Team for committing to continuing True Parents’ work for the next four years and the next forty years.



Dr. Balcomb added, in the spirit of the weekend's events, "I was there 40 years ago. I was 19 years old. I feel now that the wheel has come full circle. In so many ways, we all feel that for 40 years we could've done much more. But True Mother says it's not too late; in fact, it's time. And we can build the kingdom of God together."



Dr. Kim then recapped True Parents' message 40 years ago and today, which is, at its core, to live for the sake of others. "I really hope we meet like this as much as possible, more and more, and walk together and take care of one another. We cannot just work for our community; yes, we need to have that kind of responsibility, but our whole purpose is to live for the sake of others. America must lead for the sake of others. America has a very strong foundation, and we must stand for sake of other nations. Let us make real once again True Father's main message, and yesterday, True Mother's message."

To conclude the service, a children's choir comprised of Unificationist youth from the Washington, D.C. and Maryland areas came up to the stage and sang "We Are the World," quickly winning over the hearts of the crowd and meriting a standing ovation.



Mr. Goto offered a closing prayer, reporting on behalf of the congregation, “We see a crescendo. We pray we can be united in heart with our True Parents because through that unity, anything is possible. We want to give our love just as True Parents did 40 years ago. There’s so much left to accomplish in America and the world centered on You, our Heavenly Parent.”

