

## 6th Annual Seonghwa Memorial Celebration in Los Angeles, CA

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In March 2010, True Father held a commemorative Seonghwa Ceremony at the United Nations headquarters in New York in honor of world leaders who had ascended. The ceremony was the beginning of a new tradition by which True Father wanted to open the door for everyone to experience the preciousness of eternal life. True Father has spoken of “death” as a sacred word that should not be synonymous for “sadness and suffering” and that the term Seonghwa (ascension) was created clarify the true significance of death. He stated, “The moment we enter the spirit world should be a time that we enter a world of joy and victory with the fruits born of our lives on earth. It is a time for those of us remaining on earth to send off the departed with joy. It should be a time for great celebration. We should be shedding tears of joy instead of tears of sadness. That is the way of the sacred and noble Sunghwa Ceremony, the first step the spirit of the departed takes toward enjoying eternal life in attendance to God, within His embrace” (July 8, 2010).

Following True Father’s new tradition of celebrating the lives of those who have ascended, the Los Angeles Family Church held its 6th Annual Seonghwa Memorial Celebration on November 8, 2014 to commemorate the 50 Unificationists who have ascended in the Los Angeles Unification community, and three that ascended this year: Nobuko Martin (60 years old), Billie Ann Sabo (66 years old) and Christopher Uchida (17 days old). During the service, families of this year’s ascended gave testimonies about the lives of their loved ones.



The memorial service was attended by more than 40 families, all of which offered flowers to the photos and names of the beloved ascended. After the service concluded, a wonderful meal was served, as families and friends shared their hearts and experiences with the ascended loved ones, making a solemn experience for everyone.

The tradition of memorial services was initiated in the LA community by Mr. and Mrs. Oiwa after their first child of four months ascended more than twenty-three years ago when they buried him in Japan. Since then, they have moved to the United States and do not have many opportunities to visit their son's grave. The Oiwa couple, together with a few other families, began this tradition in the United States six years ago, and the Unification Church in Japan has been holding these celebrations for more than thirty-five years.



Mr. Oiwa stated, "People remember big names even after they are gone to spirit world. How about little names and little babies who are gone to spirit world? They want to be remembered too, don't they? All of our church members believe in spirit world. It is so natural to remember them and celebrate their lives. I am very sure that all of the members ascended before and remembered today are so happy. I would be overjoyed if my families and friends remember me after I am gone to spirit world. Wouldn't you?"

The families and staff of the LA Family Church plan to hold a Memorial Service again next year and the year after that. In addition, they plan to extend their invitation to families and friends of the ascended who are not Unificationists.

Thank you for your participation and prayers. We look forward to seeing you there next year.

