

Pure Water Assembly 2026: UPA Cadets Pick Up a Camera for the First Time

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Pure Water Assembly (PWA) 2026, held from August 13 to 26, was a global youth workshop that brought together some 650 members of the next generation from 46 countries to learn and live together for 14 days. At the site there was another group of young people, cameras in hand: the UPA cadets who took part as media staff alongside HJ PMC. With little previous experience in filming or editing, they moved from the opening ceremony to the closing ceremony, through lecture halls and pilgrimages to holy grounds, through the rain at Mona Yongpyong and backstage at the MMF, capturing the faces of several hundred participants. Things a participant would never have noticed became visible from the position of staff: the time required for a single scene to remain, the labor that continues where no one can see it, and the faces of people drawing gradually closer through the lens. Six of these young people share the story behind the Assembly.
- Editor's Note



Thank you for all your hard work as media staff. First, how did you feel when you were given the media staff assignment for this Pure Water Assembly? Had you been interested in media before?

Ah-hyeon: I've been interested in making YouTube content for a while, so I expected this would help with what I want to do in the future. But I didn't think of it only as a chance to learn filming and editing.



For this workshop, I wanted to hold onto the thought that I was the one meeting the participants on behalf of True Parents. Even when I was looking at them through the camera, I didn't want to be simply shooting a scene. I wanted to look at them with a loving heart and capture them well.

Chae-won: I had written and composed my own songs and made videos for them on YouTube, so I was naturally drawn to making music and video.

Filming, though, was almost entirely new to me, so I also worried, "Can I really be of any help to the team?" I started out carrying both the expectation of learning something new right there in the field and the worry of whether I could do it well.

Even with that interest, the actual site must have been quite different. What was the hardest part of holding the camera, filming, and then editing?



Chae-won: At first I thought I could manage, since I'd done some editing before. But when I tried to make something with real polish, it took far more skill and experience than I had expected.

I had an image in my head of how I wanted to express something, but there were moments when my skills

couldn't realize it. Which shot to choose, how to connect the flow, how to match the music to the images - inside a single video I had to keep making those choices.

I regretted not being able to express everything I had hoped to, but I think that regret is exactly what made me want to learn more.



Yoshifumi: The biggest thing I learned is that while you're filming, you have to keep thinking about how it will look.

At first I thought I just had to hold the camera and shoot whatever was needed. In reality, every small detail - where people stand, how they move, which way the camera faces, how the frame is composed - affects the finished piece. There were times I was corrected on site for not positioning myself properly.

Going through that, I began to think not simply about what to shoot, but about how a scene will reach the person watching it.

Was there a moment during the workshop that stayed with you, or a scene you're still proud of?



Haruki: Filming the participants singing praise together is what stays with me most.

When I looked at each person's face through the camera, I could feel how earnestly they were singing, and how deeply they were feeling something through this workshop.

Then it suddenly occurred to me that the way I was looking at the participants through the camera might resemble, even a little, the heart with which Heavenly Parent looks upon Heaven's children.

Getting a sense of the heart with which Heavenly Parent looks upon us was the most precious experience of this filming.



In-ji: For me too, the moment when everyone sang praise together stands out.

I filmed them with their arms around one another's shoulders, singing "우리게 달아" , and in that moment the fact that they had come from different countries and different circumstances seemed to matter not at all. Watching everyone sing with one voice, I felt, "We really have become one."

Seung-un: For me it was the day at Mona Yongpyong, when it rained heavily.

Everyone had been looking forward to that program, so I began filming with the worry, "The participants must have been looking forward to this too - will it be all right?" But even in the rain they were smiling brightly and enjoying themselves. As I filmed them, at some point I forgot it was even raining. Seeing how bright they were, I found myself happy along with them.

We understand you attended the previous Assembly as a participant. What was different this time, as staff?

Ah-hyeon: As a participant I would think, "Today's program was fun," or "That was a good time." This time I kept thinking, "What is this participant feeling right now?" and "How can we be of help?"

Looking at the participants that way from the very beginning, I could see much more deeply how the families that felt awkward at first grew truly close, like real families, and shared love with one another as the days passed. Watching that change, I felt that Heaven was there with them.

In-ji: As a participant I didn't really know, but working as media staff I came to understand how much effort goes into recording even a single moment.

The moment I remember most is packing up the equipment piece by piece after the MMF ended. During the performance all I could see was the stage and the audience, but as we put away all that equipment afterward, all the preparation and labor that had been invisible until then became visible at once.

Sorting, selecting, and retouching the countless photos taken in a single day was not easy either. Having done it myself, I learned that a single photo, a single scene, does not simply happen and remain, and I came to see in a new light the staff who have quietly carried out their roles out of sight.

This time you also filmed and worked on site together with HJ PMC. What was that like?

Ah-hyeon: What impressed me most was that they do not aim only at producing a good finished piece.

At first I was very bound by the thought that I had to make something good, and make it fast. But watching the PMC team truly love the participants as they filmed, and enjoy the time they spent with them, changed the way I thought.

I learned that good work comes not only from skill or speed, but also from the heart with which you look at the person you are filming. I felt, "So this is what it means to work with a standard of heart."



Chae-won: The director of photography and the photographer didn't only teach us how to use a camera or how to edit. They also taught us how to enjoy filming, and in what direction to look at video work.

In particular, watching my own video together with them, receiving feedback, and revising it, I felt strongly that the same material can become such a different piece.

And seeing up close how PMC records and preserves the precious moments of the members of the Family Federation, I came to think that the role of keeping a record is itself something very valuable.

Seung-un: I also felt through this experience how important recording is.

The participants we are seeing now, and the moments that bring joy to True Parents, could disappear as time passes if no one records them. But if we leave them in photos and video, those moments can reach the people who come after us.

It felt precious to me that PMC carries that role of recording and preserving such moments, and I was grateful that I could be part of those moments too.

The 14-day schedule has now come to an end. Comparing the moment you first picked up a camera with now, something must have changed in you. What has this experience become for you, and how do you think it will affect your activities and goals going forward?

Ah-hyeon: In the past, if there was a video I wanted to make, I could simply make it the way I wanted. This time, I first had to consider, "How can I capture the Pure Water Assembly better?" and "How can I show each participant authentically?"

What was especially new was thinking about how to express the content of our church and the values we hold in a way that people outside can naturally understand and relate to.

Thinking first about what will reach the person watching, rather than about the expression I want to make - that is the biggest change this experience brought.

In-ji: For me, it will remain above all as a time of growth.

I've always liked taking photos, but this time I experienced settings I don't usually encounter - event photography, retouching, studio shoots - and I was able to grow both in how I see photographs and in my technical skills.

There were moments when the schedule left me physically exhausted, but after a shoot, looking at the happy face of each participant in the photos, I was happy to think, "I'm the one who preserved this moment." It made me want to take even better photos next time.



Yoshifumi: This experience made me think a lot about how we should use media going forward.

Rather than stopping at showing on Instagram or YouTube that "this happened at the event," I began to think about how to convey the atmosphere of the site, and the heart and the experience of the people there, even to those who could not attend.

Today many people see the world through media, and enormous amounts of content are consumed quickly. In that environment, I want to keep thinking about how we can convey the values and the message we hold more quickly and more powerfully, without losing their essence.

Haruki: As a UPA cadet, I expect I'll often be in the position of preparing and running workshops and events. So I think this experience will remain as a standard for me.

When you work as staff, there is so much to do that at some point you can end up focusing only on running the program and handling the practical work. But through this experience I felt how important it is not to lose sight of why I am doing this work, and with what heart I am with the participants, no matter how busy things get.

Whatever workshop I serve on in the future, I want to be someone who can be with the participants inwardly as well as outwardly. I want to create workshops in which not only the participants are moved, but the staff who prepare them are moved and grow as well.

The 14 days of those who picked up a camera for the first time remain as a record of their own. It was an unpracticed beginning, but in the process of watching the site up close, capturing people's expressions, and considering how to convey those moments, each of them came to see a little more deeply.

And at the next Pure Water Assembly, someone else will pick up a camera. Just as these cadets did, they will face unfamiliar equipment for the first time and, among countless scenes, weigh what to preserve as they build a way of seeing that is their own. In that way, the moments of PWA will continue to be recorded and passed on through the hands of new people.