

East Garden special luncheon and tour for the 1975 Missionaries Reunion

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May 30, 2017



After attending Family Fest at the Belvedere Training Center on the morning of Sunday, May 28, the 1975 missionaries and company headed over to East Garden for a final, special luncheon and the first tours of the day at the Hyo Jeong East Garden Museum.

Banquet tables and a Korean buffet were set up in the main meeting room of East Garden when we arrived. Before beginning our meal, however, we took a moment to hear remarks and share in a toast with Mr. Neil Salonen, who served as president of the Unification movement during the early 1970s.

This precious moment brought the weekend into new focus for me: I felt both transported to 1975 and present in 2017 as I heard Mr. Salonen address his peers, congratulating them for their efforts, celebrating their faith and perseverance, acknowledging the movement's current challenges while also reaffirming the hope promised by True Parents' vision.

"I started to think, what are the right words to say? Well, starting, first of all, from deepest gratitude for your consistent faith and your presence here today. From then until today, I salute you. I salute you from the bottom of my heart....What's most valuable—and Father said that several times, 'What do you have to be proud of?'—your faith. Your faith is what you have to be proud of. All of us, we can build things and we can make things, but no matter how big, it won't be of eternal value. It's the faith: to persevere no matter what and [to know that] if things are not right, they will be right." –Neil Salonen

That same spirit of past meeting present carried over to the tour of the Hyo Jeong East Garden Museum as well. As we moved from the yellow room to the meeting room and the room with the pool table, I could feel the missionaries' many memories with True Parents filling each space with a quiet, renewed sense of reverence, which peaked when we finally made our way to the sun room.

There, we found displays of photos and ID cards from the German missionaries who were sent out in 1975 to form teams with their Japanese and American counterparts, as well as letters and reports written by various members of the missionary trinities back to True Parents and the World Mission Headquarters in New York. After a few minutes of observation, some of the missionaries in our tour group began to find their own pictures and letters in the display, or those of members of their trinities, and they became so excited. It was thrilling to be together in the sun room with the missionaries as they reconnected to the youthful heart of sacrifice and devotion that prompted many to go out all those years ago.

“Being here at East Garden is the culmination of our weekend. Of course, I am partial to seeing our pictures from the beginning of our missionary journey and a letter I don’t even remember. I took a photograph so that I can have that emotional connection to that time. But the most beautiful experience is really walking in the shoes of our True Parents here—the stairs they took every day—it’s amazing. I’m very grateful that we’re preserving these memories to pass on to the future. Thank you very much for the chance to be missionaries, True Parents. Passing on what you were passionate about, we became passionate about that, too. The missionary experience is forever our treasure.” –Margret Orr



After viewing a few more rooms in the museum, including the newly opened room dedicated to True Parents’ second son, Heung Jin Moon, the missionaries returned to the main building to pick up parting gifts prepared by the museum staff and said their final farewells, bringing the weekend to a satisfying close.

Over the course of the weekend, those of us who were able to join the 1975 missionaries in their many different activities were also privileged to hear many of their stories and bear witness to the continued relevance of their experiences to the Unification movement and the world today.

High on my list of takeaways for the weekend: the realization that many of these men and women, in pursuit of a higher ideal, were deported and even imprisoned multiple times as they tried to carry out their missions around the world. In short, their faith and love for God and True Parents, seen so clearly in their present wisdom and enduring spirit, empowered them to stand up for what was righteous and good, whatever the obstacles they faced. That combination of humility and courage has really inspired me to look closely at my life and faith to see how much of their legacy I have inherited and how I can grow to be more like them in the months and years ahead.

To the 1975 missionary class, thank you for everything!