

## Top Gun Advance Conference at the IPEC in Las Vegas

Mike Smith  
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Nearly 50 Top Guns and spouses held a Top Gun Advance Conference over the weekend of November 6 to 8, 2015 at the International Peace Education Center in Las Vegas.

Top Gun alumni, members of the American Freedom Coalition (later called the American Family Coalition), together with current and former senior leaders of FFWPU-USA, have held several reunions over the past few years. The previous reunion spawned Origins Partnership, a 501c3 nonprofit organization dedicated to mentoring younger Unificationists and supporting projects that model and teach the revolutionary principles of True Parents and solve real world problems.





This meeting expanded on previous reunions. It included members of the FFWPU USA National Ministry Team, Unification Theological Seminary (UTS), the American Clergy Leadership Conference (ACLC) and The Washington Times.

Dr. Ki Hoon Kim, North American continental director of FFWPU, greeted the group and related a message from True Mother regarding her vision of the Top Gun legacy.



*Dr. Ki Hoon Kim gives the welcoming message.*

“True Mother has praised the spirit of Top Guns more than a hundred times,” he told the conferees, and added: “Today, more than ever, True Mother has developed Top Gun education of our second generation. The most important thing for all of us is to be loyal to Heavenly Parent, loyal to our True Parents and loyal to America.”



Dr. Kim went on to say: “You are bringing back True Father’s spirit to America. True Mother wants the Top Gun spirit to be inherited by all following generations. America is God’s chosen nation. We can build communities, states and a nation with the spirit of Top Gun. True Mother wants to implant that spirit into every nation.”



Dr. Kim’s comments accurately summarized the feeling of the participants. Almost twice the size of previous meetings, this group met seeking to re-establish the relevance of the Unification movement in the United States and to re-energize the Top Gun mission to once more create world-class programs like the CAUSA and American Leadership Conferences that galvanized Americans to defeat communism and promote faith, family and freedom.

The conference kicked off on Friday night at a local Korean restaurant with dinner hosted by the Hon. Patrick and Myung Hee Hickey. Pat, a member of the Nevada Assembly, spoke about his internal growth confronting the challenges in a high leadership position and how the training of True Parents helped him meet those challenges.

Saturday's program was held at the International Peace Education Center. Two of the organizers, Hon. Mark Anderson and Dr. David Burgess, welcomed the participants. With Mike Smith, leader of the US Top Gun group, serving as master of ceremonies, the gathering heard a presentation by Dr. Mose Durst, a former president of the Unification movement in America, on "Possibilities for the Compassionate Society." Other presentations included "Retirement Planning," by Ray Martin; "Changing the Culture and Citizen Engagement," moderated by Jim Gavin with briefings by Tom McDevitt and Jim Boothby; "Spiritual Roots and the Founding of America," by Ron Pappalardo; and "Passing the Torch to the Next Generation," a report from Dr. Burgess, Judge Mark Anderson and Sen. Mark Boitano of Origins Partnership on their successful Project Fusion events in Barrytown, New York, and Pasadena, California. Conferees were also informed about the financial progress of The Washington Times by Dr. Michael Jenkins, and about new projects of the Washington Times Foundation.



*Dr. Michael Jenkins gives a presentation on the financial progress of The Washington Times.*



*Mr. Jim Boothby gives remarks on "Changing the Culture and Citizen Engagement".*

Tom McDevitt, chairman of The Washington Times and a former AFC leader, briefed the gathering about the growing popularity of advertiser-sponsored special sections of The Washington Times focused on

constitutional literacy, the Bible's influence in civilization, William Wilberforce, and the power of prayer. Dr. Jenkins gave the group a guided tour of the Peace Center and nearby places where True Parents had worked, including a complete oral history of all of True Parents' investments in Las Vegas.



*Tom McDevitt gives a presentation on The Washington Times.*

In a breakout session titled "Ensuring a Bright Future for FFWPU," Mike Smith and Dr. Hugh Spurgin, president of Unification Theological Seminary, focused on the topic of "rebranding the image of the movement." Dr. Spurgin reported to the group the progress made to enlarge the readership of the UTS newsletter. He emphasized that the seminarians are making significant contributions to the culture of the Unification movement and America itself, yet often without telling anyone about what they are doing, a situation he wants to reverse.



*Dr. Hugh Spurgin speaks on the UTS newsletter*

“What I am saying to the alumni is, ‘Be proud of your Alma Mater and who you are.’ We don’t know one another’s stories. Our UTS newsletter is telling the stories of what our graduates have done,” he said.

Dr. Spurgin urged everyone to rally around True Mother during the current situation of the movement. “I want everyone to know: True Parents are two people, True Father and True Mother. True Mother is strong, and she is determined and worthy of our support. We alumni have to follow our conscience and take responsibility ourselves to do what is necessary,” he said.

The conference was punctuated by unforgettable jazz and gospel music from four veteran performers, Rev. Joshua Cotter, Rick Joswick, Rob Schwarz and Cory Boitano. The performances included movement standbys like “If Life Were Gracious Enough” and “One in the Spirit” as well as jazzy gospel arrangements of “He’s Good!” and “In My Father’s House.”



Sunday Service was given by Ron Pappalardo on “America in God’s Providence,” explaining how God had intervened at crucial moments in the lives and careers of George Washington and Abraham Lincoln. Many listeners were moved to tears.



*Mr. Ron Pappalardo gives the Sunday sermon.*

As the program concluded, Nicholas Buscovich revealed that God had inspired him during his morning prayer on Saturday that this group should make a declaration of support for True Parents. The Top Gun Declaration, authored by Nicholas and Dr. Burgess, was presented to the group for members to sign, which read as follows:

“We, the Top Guns, affirm that True Parents are one. We wish to give all our support to True Mother in fulfilling the providence of God. We express our profound gratitude to True Parents for their 50+ years of sacrifice and dedication for Heavenly Parent, for America and the world and for each one of us. We honor and uphold the dignity of True Parents and invite all others to do the same.”

Various prayer networks served as the foundation for this gathering. In the weeks ahead, the group will work on developing practical plans for educational and outreach efforts during the election cycle of 2016 and beyond to include interested colleagues throughout the nation.

