

Cranes Club Regroups in Korea

Miilhan Stephens
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Twenty-five Cranes Club executives meet in Korea

On February 19, a group of 25 young adult Unificationists gathered together for a Cranes Club conference amid the Holy Day festivities in Korea. Cranes Club is an organization founded by True Mother and run by Unificationist professionals worldwide who share a desire to not only excel in their business endeavors, but to give back to their communities and the world at large. In their recent meeting, several Cranes Club executives had the opportunity to discuss how things are going in their local Cranes Club chapters and how to develop this organization further.

“I came to this meeting without expectations, so I was happy to have had a very moving and impactful experience,” said Miilhan Stephens, FFWPU USA Vice President. “We talked for hours even after the meeting had finished. We got to know one another better and grew our interest to get more involved. The round table introductions was the most powerful part of the program. Through people’s authentic sharing, I saw that everyone is genuinely supportive of Cranes Club and what we’re set out to do.”



Miilhan Stephens, Shinyoung Chang and other Cranes Club executives

FFWPU International Vice President, In Sup Park, shared a message with the group as well. Miilhan shared, “In Sup Park’s message about wanting to reconnect with friends that he hasn’t seen for 20 years helped me understand the heart of how Cranes Club operates.”



In Sup Park shared a message at the Cranes Club meeting

In Sup Park's message:

“I'd like to specifically thank Dr. Lim and Chairman Lee; Cranes Club in Korea; the Korean FFWPU Headquarters; Kazuhiko Noguchi, Sun Jin Moon's assistant; and International Headquarters for all the details and all the work in general for trying to get this meeting together. Also, all of this is possible because of True Parents. If we look around this room, it's a little miracle that we always need to remind ourselves that we can be at these events, gathering the international community and international family. It's all because of True Parents and also the first generation Unificationists, their blood, sweat and tears, and their vision for the future. I hope that we can inherit that and we can appreciate them for that. I have a little prepared segment that I would like to read, and hopefully this might help consolidate and solidify both the purpose of Cranes Club and what the mission could be in the future:

Beloved fellow Cranes. It is a tremendous joy and honor for me to have this opportunity to greet you all here today. I'm profoundly grateful that each and every one of you gathered for this special Cranes Club meeting, for we will share together and discuss our goals for 2016. First of all, I want to express my deep appreciation to True Parents for their lives of love and sacrifice for all of us. Also, I want to share my boundless gratitude to True Mother, who is carrying the heavenly burden of leadership of our worldwide movement. We are very proud of her, and I know we all want to do our best to support her, doing the best we can despite our limitations.

In developing Cranes Club, with the guidance and blessing of True Mother, many people asked me, 'What is its purpose?' Frankly, in the beginning the project was met with some skepticism and doubt. However, as we launched Cranes Club in Europe, the United States and Korea in 2015, we received a lot of feedback and recommendations. We received much encouragement and inspiration, but we also received instructive suggestions for improvement. Many want to see Cranes Club become an organization that's very interactive, focusing on dialogue, connecting and networking. Overall, I think there are several key motivations for starting Cranes Club based on my personal experience, especially as someone who was born into the Unification movement.

First of all, on a very personal level, growing up as a young Unificationist, I experienced numerous workshops, Sunday school programs, and summer camps, up until the time of the Marriage Blessing. The church did a great job in educating and supporting me as a young person by sponsoring many of these workshops and camps. The deep friendships that were formed and our youthful camaraderie as we grew together as an extended family left an indelible mark in my heart. Also, in many respects, it was only the second generation Unificationists who could really understand the numerous challenges, difficulties and issues that other Unificationists born into this movement had to deal with.

This time spent together, learning that we all shared a precious common background and history, was a great source of inspiration that both strengthened our relationship to God and True Parents. As we grew and came to know and understand one another, we also could support each other. But over the last 20 years, I came to notice that for many of us—especially after receiving the Blessing, and for very understandable reasons—priorities began to gradually change. The practical and very necessary responsibilities of trying to raise and support a family became the number one priority for many of my peers. Also, many Unificationist-born young adults even had to take on the added responsibility of trying to provide for and support their parents as well. So again, very understandably it's easy for people to drift apart because priorities have changed.

Under such circumstances, it's easy to lose our connection to one another. I don't think the situation is unique just to our movement. It is a natural part of the cycle of life that happens in organizations or groups, for example, among university students after they graduate. This is why universities form alumni associations. I know that FFWPU is very much focused on investing in our youth. Still, in the back of my mind, I'm very concerned that if we do not provide a forum for meaningful interaction and a way to reconnect, especially among the older Unificationist-born young adults after they receive the Blessing, then like a cup with a hole in the bottom, water will leak out, even as we keep trying to fill it. Like HARP, CARP and Youth Federation, which try to connect high school or college students, I hope that Cranes Club can inspire us to build stronger connections with each other.



We can strengthen our bonds of friendship, supporting each other and building a community, especially among older Unificationist-born young adults, many of whom are working professionally. About a month ago, I was in New York City and had an opportunity to meet a *hyung* [Korean for “older brother”], whom I had not seen for probably about 20 years. As I greeted him, thinking about all the unique challenges and difficulties he must have faced and overcome, and feeling very proud of all those accomplishments despite all the difficulties that he faced, I was moved to greet him with a big hug. I felt sincere joy as we reconnected, especially after such a long time.

Cranes Club, from an external point of view, can provide a great professional network along Unificationist-born young adults. In this way, we can mentor younger brothers and sisters, engage in volunteerism and philanthropy, and support each other professionally. From an internal point of view, Cranes Club provides a great opportunity for us to rekindle, reconnect, and maintain lost connections with all our extended and international family, the worldwide family that True Parents and our first generation elders have built with their vision, blood, sweat, and tears. Cranes Club can help us all find strength in knowing that we share a precious common history and we have each other, no matter what difficulties we face. Cranes Club can help us to continue to nurture and develop our precious community as we second generation Unificationists grow older and wiser.

I sincerely applaud each and every one who has gathered here today. I deeply respect your accomplishments in life, for I know that these accomplishments were not won easily. I admire you all the more for knowing the many difficulties and challenges you must have had to deal with in your life. In conclusion, with the spirit of family, with the spirit of reunion, and the spirit of reconnecting with joy, love, care and support, I encourage you to be actively involved in Cranes Club. Let us work together to develop and expand the Cranes Club for the sake of our movement, for the sake of the world, that needs what we have to offer, especially when we come together in harmony and cooperation. Thank you very much for all your support and investment in Cranes Club. May Heavenly Parent and True Parents bless each and every one of your precious family always.”