

## World Café

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It is challenging when you have a Founder who speaks for hours upon hours on end. The last time I heard Father speak was in Korea at an Original Substance of the Divine Principle (OSDP) program, shortly before he passed. He spoke from 5am until 2pm in spite of the fact that Mother tried and tried to get him to stop. She sent him a note to meet her at the Boat Dock but he said, ‘if Mother wants to talk to me I am right here.’ Mother knew that many ministers had arrived late the night before and had not gotten very much sleep and no meals.

Finally about noon, I asked Bishop Kim if I could take the ministers to lunch. He gave me the OK and we all went over to the cafeteria for a classic Chung Pyung luncheon. When we returned about 2pm, Father was speaking and I just assumed that he had just gotten back from lunch, but the reality was, that he had never even gone to lunch.

Given this scenario, sadly many of our leaders seem to have dedicated their lives to emulating him and thus, they also tend to speak for ever and ever. I even remember one 3-day conference which promised to offer discussion time during the final session. Sadly and not unexpectedly, the program ran long and this planned discussion never materialized. On a brighter note, several years ago, our church president came to Chicago and had us break into small groups to discuss amongst ourselves. I remember sister from Russian Collegiate Association for the Research of Principle (CARP) sharing in our group. She told us about how painful it was to set up the CARP table every day on campus and deal with consistent nasty persecution. It was so refreshing to find out that she was a real human being, not just someone I saw every week at Sunday Service.

This past weekend our Church organized a “World Café Session” to help set goals and directions for our Church this year. We had 5 or 6 tables which each had a topic. These included; Youth Development; Social Activities (Universal Peace Federation/American Clergy Leadership Conference/Women’s Federation World Peace); Marriage & Blessing; and Community Development.

For me the most inspiring session was “Youth development.” Sitting with 4 second generation Unificationists, (sadly the only ones in the room) we talked about how the second generation is changing (one aspect is that more and more they are opting for college and career, rather than growing their spirit through GPA or similar programs). In Chicago we currently do not have a Youth Pastor for our 20-something group or Sunday School for middle school students. My thought is that we need to schedule a

similar event , just for the second gen. When I asked the Youth leaders why they felt that there was no response from the second gen to this program, they stated that the second gen need to feel a sense of ownership in order to participate. They have very little interest in participating in our activities.

I enjoyed the discussions about establishing community in order to push Father's work ahead. We discussed how people unite on providential projects, but how there is very little social community participation among the members. Some members stated that this was not a cultural phenomenon, but rather was true for each ethnicity (Western, Jewish, African-American, Japanese or Korean. 5 years ago we started small groups. Today, the only one that is still going strong is the dog-walking group which includes 2 brothers that meet nearly every week to walk their dogs and solve the problems of the church and the problems of the world. In Chicago, there is very little social interaction that is not centered on a providential activity.

So to be part of an activity where members who rarely speak out publicly are giving their opinions was a refreshing burst. Especially so, when I attended the group on the blessing. Chicago is a very young community and we are blessed to have only a small handful of 2nd gen couples whose blessings have failed. This is great for potential blessing candidates. It was discussed how the fact that True Parents two youngest daughters were blessed to their boyfriends has now opened up the avenue for members' own children to be blessed to spouses from beyond the Unificationist community. One parent mentioned how he was now open to his daughter being blessed to her boyfriend, who is an upstanding young man from a good family. His hope is that the young man will be willing to study the Principle and go through the blessing ceremony. He feels that his children respect their parents' commitment to True Parents, even though their children have thus far not chosen to go through the "traditional" blessing course.

In conclusion, let me just state that the afternoon was inspirational and refreshing. It was not a time for oatmeal, for complaining, or for being negative. The challenge now is for the inspirations, hopes and ideas to materialize into reality. Politicians often complain that too many people, "talk the talk," without "walking the walk." The same philosophy must be applied here. The afternoon discussions offer great potential, if church members are willing to seize the bull by the horns and put their ideas into action. This was just the very first attempt, so I do not expect miracles right away. But eventually we must all "walk the walk" and put ideas into action. Then it will become the ultimate reality show.