

Unification Church Members Welcome True Parents to Canada in December 1971

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Father and Mother arrive at Toronto airport in the evening of December 12

Unification Church members welcomed True Parents to their center in Canada from December 12 to 18, 1971. Father had visited Canada once previously, in early July 1965, and had created a holy ground in Ottawa, the capital city.

During the course of his Third World Tour, True Father landed in Los Angeles, California, on December 11, 1971, intending to conduct his first public speaking tour of seven American cities in early 1972. Due to problems with the immigration office, True Parents were unable to remain in the United States. Therefore, they departed from Los Angeles and arrived in Toronto on Sunday, December 12, 1971, at 8:10 p.m. accompanied by Mrs. Won Pok Choi, Rev. Young Whi Kim, then president of the Church in Korea, and Mr. Mitsuharu Ishii, a Japanese member.

This visit was unexpected for both True Parents and Canadian Unificationists. Although True Father explained the spiritual significance of visiting Canada during that time, the practical purpose of the visit was to obtain a visa for entry into the United States. It was not clear how long they would stay; True Father did speculate before arriving in Canada that they might need to stay for up to two weeks to

acquire a visa.



Father and Mother with the Canadian members at Toronto Airport on December 18, the day of True Parents' departure

At the time, Canadian Unificationists lived in a rented row house at 76 Scollard Street in Toronto, which served as the church center. Since there was little space, arrangements were made to reserve a room at the nearby Park Plaza Hotel. When True Father arrived in Toronto, he immediately requested to see the

Toronto Unification Church Center. Upon being informed that a room had been reserved at the hotel, he asked for the reservations to be canceled and insisted that he and his party stay together with the members. He said, "I want to stay with my family." Since there was little furniture and no beds, True Parents slept on foam mattresses that were placed on the floor of a bedroom on the top floor of the row house. True Father, nevertheless, demonstrated no sign of complaint and did not comment that better arrangements had not been made for him and his party. Instead he sought to put his hosts at ease, since they were rather nervous and shy upon meeting their spiritual leader for the first time.

The first evening, True Father spent time informally with the members, asking them personal questions such as their age, occupation and length of time in the movement. He also showed his photo album with pictures of his family. Despite having had a long journey, True Father spoke with everyone until 2:00 a.m. about the destiny of Korea and his plans for America.



Father speaking to the members at their church center in Toronto

The Canadian members of the Unification Church had saved their funds and offered True Father a gift of one thousand dollars. However, after receiving the envelope containing the funds, True Father stated to those present that they could not afford to give him this money. He then took one thousand dollars from his own resources and returned the envelope with two thousand dollars in it and asked that the funds be used toward furthering the Canadian mission.

The next morning, December 13, True Father rose early and woke everyone at 6:30 a.m. Shortly after breakfast he and his party visited the United States Consulate on University Avenue in Toronto. His purpose was to acquire a visitor's visa for entry into the United States. During this visit to the American Consulate, True Father learned that immigration officials had rejected his application due to their suspicion that True Father had been a communist in Korea in 1968.

According to Katharine Bell, who accompanied True Father to the US Consulate that day, immigration officials were very reluctant to reveal why True Father was being refused entry. She persistently asked the official at the consulate for a clear reason and, after considerable hesitation, the official explained to Katharine their concern over True Father's alleged communist affiliation. When True Father heard of this he expressed that he was at least pleased to learn why he was having difficulties obtaining entry into the United States. That same day, True Father and his party went shopping at the Simpson's department store in downtown Toronto. In the evening True Father spoke for three and a half hours concerning various nations and their roles in the Providence of Restoration.

On Tuesday, December 14, an excursion was made to Niagara Falls, a one-and-a-half hour drive from Toronto. Robert Duffy drove the party, which included True Parents, Won Pok Choi, Young Whi Kim, and Mitsuharu Ishii. Five Canadian Unification Church members accompanied them in a separate vehicle. Upon returning to Toronto, True Father spoke on "The Formula for God's Providence". In the conclusion to his speech True Father said:

“Those who shed tears for themselves are fools, great fools. Those who shed tears for others are wise men, because they can win the whole world and win God and everything in the world. By doing that, you can be the possessor of God’s love. You can hold the position of, and inherit parental love from God, conjugal love between man and wife, and children’s love... When you pray, do not pray for yourself, but for others. If you do this the result will be yours. Do not pray for the Unification Church, Unified Family, but pray that God may use you to save Canada and save the world, at the cost of your lives.” (Dec. 14, 1971)

For the small group of Canadian Unificationists it was perhaps difficult to envision that they should save Canada and the world.

On Wednesday, December 15, True Parents took several of the members to see a movie called “Man in the Wilderness” [forerunner to “The Revenant”] which reflected the struggles of a man alone in the wilderness and his fight against the elements. That same evening, many guests visited the Unification Church center and True Father spoke on Jesus and Restoration. Since the majority of the members either worked full-time or were students, True Father spoke in the evenings so as not to disturb everyone’s schedule. Indeed, some of the Unificationists were in the midst of university exams.



Early Canadian members: Standing, left to right, Katherine Erickson, unknown, Bob Duffy, Alan Wilding; Seated are Canada pioneers Carl and Linna Rapkins

On Thursday, December 16, True Father and his party toured significant sites in Toronto such as the University of Toronto, City Hall and the Toronto Dominion Center, which was then the tallest building in Canada and the entire British Commonwealth.

On Friday, December 17, True Father’s visa situation was resolved. Due to the intervention of Republican Senator Strom Thurmond of South Carolina, and efforts made by the Unification Church members in the United States and around the world, True Father was granted a visitor’s visa.

Since Senator Thurmond had attended the 1970 meeting of the World Anti-Communist League in Japan, a conference that the International Federation for Victory Over Communism, affiliated with the Unification Church, had participated in and substantially supported financially, he was familiar with True Father’s movement in Korea and Japan and Father’s anti-communist leanings. It was ironic that an individual who devoted so much of his energy to opposing communism should be denied entry into the United States on the count that he was a communist!

That evening True Father spoke on Witnessing and Restoration, and also explained his many plans for the future. He encouraged the Canadian members to find more members and emphasized the importance of studying Divine Principle and Victory Over Communism Theory. On Saturday December 18, at 10:30 a.m., True Parents and their party departed Toronto for Washington D.C.

In the two years from 1972-74, Father would speak in all fifty states and witness a ten-fold increase in American membership. Due to True Parents' visit, the Canadian Unificationists were infused with new energy and lifted to a new level of consciousness. Indeed, they now saw themselves as representing a country with a special providential role.



A Divine Principle lecture in a park, 1971