

True Family Values Awards Banquet at Monument of Faith Church in Chicago

David Rendel
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On January 27, the 22nd Annual True Family Values Awards Banquet was held at the Monument of Faith Church in Chicago. 300 clergy members, political leaders, civic leaders, and other guests came from seven states to honor the individuals and organizations who demonstrated the principle of living for the sake of others, particularly as it applies to endorsing family values.

The keynote speaker of this year's banquet was Archbishop George Augustus Stallings, Jr. Archbishop Stallings delivered a profound message, encouraging everyone to live lives that are consistent with their faith in God. This life of faith, he explained, necessitates that people treat others as their own brothers and sisters, because everyone is a child of God. Archbishop Stallings also emphasized that the Kingdom of Heaven is something that is built through our own work within our marriages, families, communities, and the nation, referring to the example set by True Parents.



After Archbishop Stallings' moving speech, it was time to award those who had exemplified a life consistent with their faith over the past year with the True Family Values Award. The recipients included: Mrs. Monica T. Katsigazi, founder and Agency Administrator at Citizens Bright Ideas Home Care, which takes care of older adults in the comfort of their own homes; Dr. Walt Whitman, Jr., founder of the Grammy award-winning youth choir, the Soul Children of Chicago, which has used music as the motivator to have faith in themselves and in God; Hon. Michelle Mussman, Illinois State Representative of the 56th District who has pushed to make Illinois more fiscally responsible and protect vital services for residents; Bishop Aaron Woods, a renowned evangelist and founder of Action for Christ ministry; and Evangelist Rita L. Pritchett, Associate Chaplain of the St. Jude League of the Chicago Police Department.



Although the True Family Values Banquet boasted larger audiences in the past, the relatively smaller gathering created a spirit of family and profound unity. The food at the banquet was served family-style, with the attendees not only sharing in heart, but also their food.

"It feels like we are moving into a new dimension of cooperation amongst people of faith and civic leaders," said Rev. David Rendel, Midwest Subregional Director of the Family Federation for a Heavenly USA. "We are striving to lead by example, not blame others, and instead be the ones to bring about real change."

Bishop Connie Banza, a longtime member of the American Clergy Leadership Conference (ACLCL), echoed Rev. Rendel's sentiments regarding unity: "I know for a fact that there is nothing we can't do as long as we stay together, tear down walls, and build bridges of love," she said.

Rev. Dr. Stephen Thurston, Pastor of the New Covenant Missionary Baptist Church who also delivered the benediction on the night of the banquet, said, "It is a joy to be a part of this wonderful fellowship of clergy, congregants and of people who believe that peace in God is the way for us moving forward. We thank God for all that True Parents have done and what God is still doing in the lives and legacy that they leave for us."

Celebratory music by the soulful Rev. Cornelius Clar, Pastor of Jacob's House, solidified the oneness of the attendees once more as the religious, political, and civic leaders sang together in praise of family values and God, their heavenly parent.